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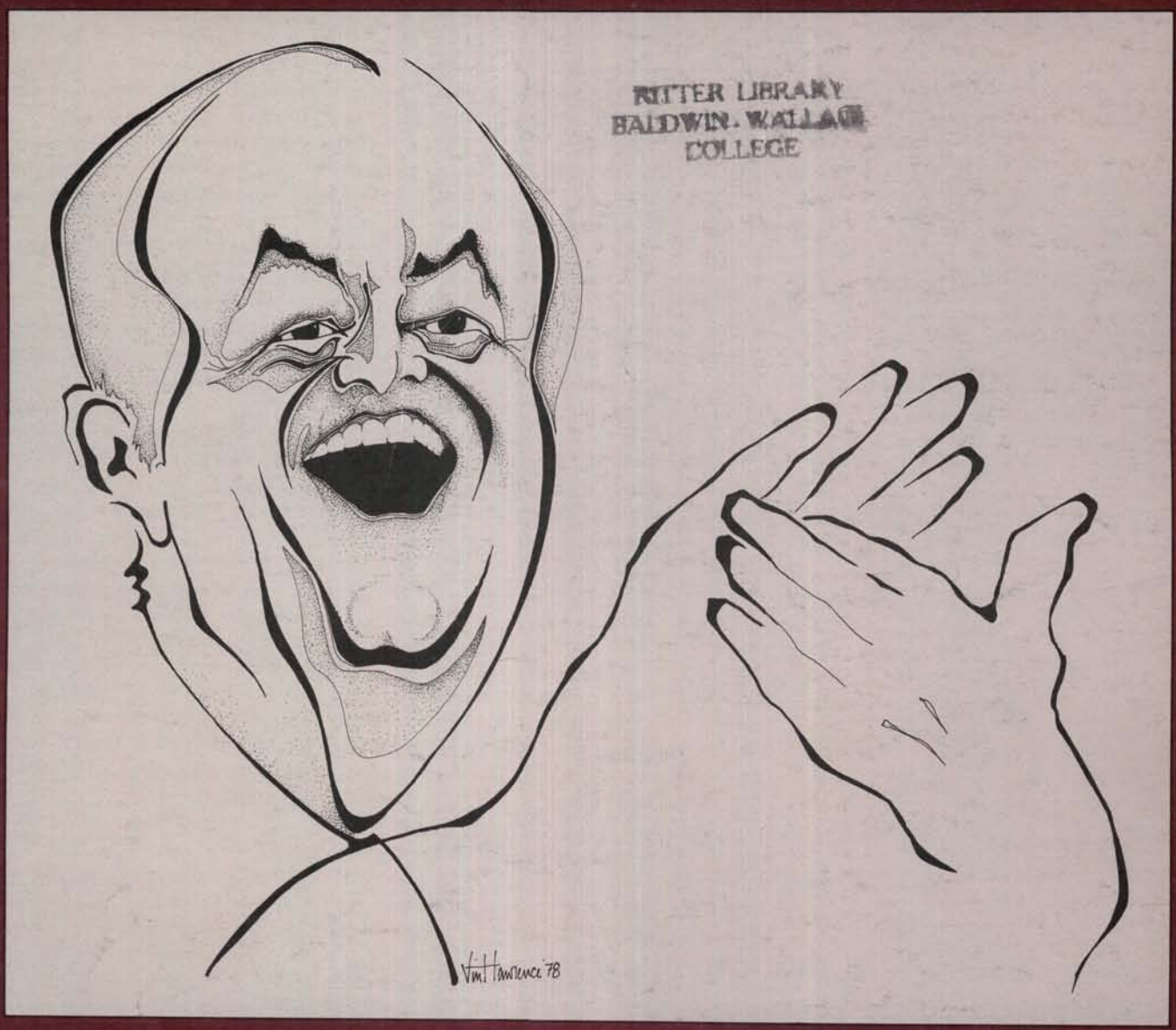


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## Humphrey the Politician • Humphrey and Vietnam

*The Editors* *Chester L. Cooper*

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# TRB

from Washington
January 28, 1978

## Dual-Control Vehicle

Here we go again! Congress is back, Carter is delivering Messages, and we're off on another of our thrilling rides in the only governmental vehicle on earth that has two steering wheels: one for the President, one for Congress. You never can tell who's driving, who's braking, and who's in charge. Strangely enough the picturesque device has run pretty well for almost two centuries, to the awe and admiration of other countries, some of which have tried the American model but never with success.

As we start the 1978 trip here are a few road signs to help the journey. For example, Mr. Carter wants to revive business confidence. The stock market is supposed to be the fever chart. He might note what acerb Thurman Arnold said on this subject in FDR's day:

"Just as the medieval Church in times of trouble stressed the necessity of faith as an end in itself, so our business leaders decided that 'lack of business confidence' was the cause of continued depression. The remedy was to preach business confidence, whether in your heart you believed it or not. This attitude reached a high note in 1932. Men like Nicholas Murray Butler issued statements that 'courage will end the slump.' The nation, in fact, was called to gather in a giant prayer meeting to reaffirm its faith in business leaders."

Arnold gave credit for the economic ideas in his book to Leon Keyserling, who is still around. So, also, is the fetish of "business confidence."

Congress and President will first steer their curious dual-control vehicle over the bumpy road of energy conservation. Next come the Panama Canal treaties. Woodrow Wilson had some comment about Panama, printed in the Democratic textbook of 1912, just before he became President:

"Our acquisition of the Panama Canal Zone has been a scandal since the day of the fake 'revolution' of November 3, 1903, by which the Republic of Panama was established in order that the United States might buy direct from a make-believe sovereignty the desired right to construct the canal. . . .By that act we lost the goodwill and friendship of all the Latin Americans. In every country to the south of us we are distrusted, feared, hated."

The competing claims of government to promote employment or to halt inflation, to reduce the taxes of the affluent or to give assistance to the poor will be one of the themes of the new session. It is a time of extraordinary confusion: production goes up but the stock market goes down; there are inflation and recession at the same time; economic recovery continues but the dollar slips. Most Americans by now know that black unemployment is twice that of whites, and the unemployment of black teenagers in city ghettoes is 40 or 50 percent, storing up social dynamite for a later time. There's a quotation for that, too, from a famous Swedish economist who knows this nation, Gunnar Myrdal: "the big majority of Americans, who are comparatively well off, have developed an ability to have enclaves of people in the greatest misery without almost noticing them."

The great art in successful American government is to get a President and a Congress to cooperate at the dual controls and not to try to dominate each other. Congressional government has never been successful; we tried it, under Andrew Johnson after the Civil War and again under Harding after World War I. On the other hand, there is a revolt now against Imperial Presidents and the feisty Second Session of the 95th Congress shows signs of upstaging Carter. Normally that means a zig-zag course for our dual-control government or stalling the motor. Carter's great problem is the lack of a dedicated and enthusiastic national following which is an almost indispensable condition for controlling Congress, even one of the same party. The President keeps trying to create a constituency but seems to lack fire and force and sometimes shows a kind of tone-deaf ineptness, as when he didn't get the signal to drop Bert Lance in time, and now again is dallying over what to do about a Republican, US attorney David Marston in Pennsylvania, who is investigating corrupt Democrats.

Hubert Humphrey is a great loss to Mr. Carter in Congress. He not only cracked the President's reserve but he balanced off some of the Grover

(continued on page 38)

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# Correspondence

## More Utopianism

*To the editors:*

Just a footnote to Henry Fairlie's article "An Idea Whose Time is Never" (*TNR*, Jan. 14). Mr. Fairlie regards a proposal, such as that of Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg, 50 years ago, that the nations of the world renounce war as an instrument of national policy, as something almost out of a dream world.

Article six of the Constitution of the Second Spanish Republic, adopted in December 1931, states: "España renuncia a la guerra como instrumento de política nacional" (Spain renounces war as an instrument of national policy). This may be the only time in recorded history that the constitution of any nation has incorporated such an article.

*Norman Sacks*
*Madison, Wisconsin*

## H.G. Wells

*To the editors:*

In "An Idea Whose Time is Never," Henry Fairlie perpetuates the myth of H.G. Wells as a believer in automatic Progress (Fairlie's capital), as a naive optimist suddenly reduced to despair by the realities of World War II. Since this myth has been of great service to many writers during the last 30 years, the question of what Wells actually believed and wrote is a matter of perhaps only academic interest. Nonetheless, one more Wellsian academic will here make one more effort to set the record straight.

Wells's message was always that mankind would perish as a species unless it adapted to the changes in its environment brought about by technological advance; that is, that mankind would drift into disaster unless it consciously chose to set about the building of a world-wide utopia. The "optimistic" *Outline of History* was followed in the next year (1921) by *The Salvaging of Civilization*, in which he wrote that "It is manifest that unless some unity of purpose can be achieved in the world, unless the ever more violent and disastrous incidence of war can be averted, unless some common control can be imposed on the headlong waste of man's limited inheritance of coal, oil, and moral energy that is now going on, the history of humanity must presently culminate in some sort of disaster, repeating and exaggerating the disaster of the great war, producing chaotic social conditions, and going on thereafter in a degenerative process towards extinction." Fairlie's statement that Wells "did not then stop to think of why [people] fight" may be true of *Little Wars*, but it is not true of the bulk of his writing, for his great theme, expressed most succinctly in *The Anatomy of Frustration* (1936) was precisely those forces in human nature and modern life that frustrate man in his collective effort to create a rational world order. And his novels of the future, from *The World Set Free* (early 1914) through *The Holy Terror* (1938) all suggested that men would find the will to build utopia only after the world had been set free of its past, had been swept clean of the prevailing social and political institutions, by a catastrophe of world-wide proportions.

Wells would have agreed with all but two words of Mr. Fairlie's concluding statements: "To begin with such illusion that, like Wells, one ends only in an abyss of disillusion, is not a path to follow. But between disillusion and lack of illusion there is a world of difference which we should inhabit." For he never suffered from either the illusion or the disillusion. The 32-page *Mind at the End of Its Tether*, which has so astounded all believers in Wells the naive optimist, was only an expression of the momentary despair of a dying man. Wells's pessimistic view of the probable near future is better expressed in *The Fate of Man* (1938, in UK, *The Fate of Homo Sapiens*) and in his last full-length book, never published in the US, *'42 to '44: A Contemporary Memoir upon Human Behaviour During the Crisis of the World Revolution.*

*R.D. Mullen*
*Indiana State University*

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## Cure for stagflation

*To the editors:*

Lester Thurow and Arthur Oku believe, according to TRB, that th "stagflation" we have been experienci is historically unprecedented and, acco ding to textbook economics, shouldn happen (*TNR*, Jan. 7).

They are right in the points the make. But they fail to point out why th market no longer operates to restor employment after a recession.

The new situation is that many mor large corporations than formerly hav oligopolistic power. They administe prices with little regard to the forces o supply and demand. The power of thes corporations to interfere with th market is so great that when deman falls off prices are maintained, no lowered. Often prices are raised. Con sider the automobile industry. In 197 and in 1975 additional lots were rente to store the cars that could not be sold a prevailing prices. Prices were ther raised in order to maintain their profits

This is the problem that must b faced. How do we restore competition or if we can't, what do we substitute fo it? So long as we pretend that we have "free, competitive market," and that i left alone, it will restore prosperity without inflation, we will make littl progress in eliminating the "stagflation" that is proving so disastrous to ou economy.

*John C. Davis*
*New Port Richey, Florida*

## Present state of the art

*To the editors:*

Watch it, Saroyan! ("Oh Death Where I Thy Story Line?" *TNR*, Jan. 7). Fals modesty will get you nowhere! You ge no disagreement from me when you try to play at being humble about you prowess as a funny man.

Trouble is, I think you haven't grown much, literarywise, since the . . . *Flying Trapeze* days. You're still doing obscure writing at the old stand. (I can't forget the comment a friend made to me many decades ago: "His stuff reads like something written by an insane man." Yes, the chap was unsophisticated, didn't realize that such as Joyce and Beckett had raised psychosis to rhetorical respectability, but I felt he was onto an uncomfortable truth, nevertheless.)



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As to S's idols, Buchwald and Baker, ll accept number one over number two nytime, because his work comes hrough to me as more spontaneous, ess contrived—and just plain more nteresting. (I'm not sure R.B.'s percep- iveness is top drawer either. *Breslin's* my nain pick for seeing-it-like-it-is.)

Why lock the gates right there, nowever? True, Perelman and Allen ren't perfect. S.J. relies too much on xhibiting his travel past—especially hrough the dictionary—and Woody gets back at anti-Semitism by practicing t himself, but they're *very* amusing (to ne—no absolutes here!) all the same.

And why leave out *les femmes?* Much hough Bombeck bombs me with her requent bathroom and septic tank llusions, I feel she's doing that at her ublisher's bidding, to go along with ashion. Her ability to tickle with ormula-type exaggeration of com- nonplace irritation is tremendous. I magine she'd be *quite* able to handle the norbid bit brought to us by Saroyan- baby.

Joan Rivers is no slouch as a humorous reator, either, though I could do without her no-no subjects, too.

Let's not knock death as a useful usiness-item, however. Not only does t help the trades best known for making ash money out of it, but look at what it lid for at least *one* good and serious writer—Ms. Mitford.

Moreover, where would genealogy be without it? (I'll answer that one myself. There'd be more room at public library ables, since these looker-uppers aren't NTERESTED in anything else!)

*Joseph Gancher*
*Havenwood Retirement Community*
*Concord, New Hampshire*

## A clarification

*To the editors:*

In my recent article on economists and their state of professional contentment ("The Trouble With Economists," *TNR*, Jan. 14), a sentence telling of the Great Depression appears as follows: "There was no unemployment insurance until 1933, no effort to increase job opportunities . . ." This shows the considerable consequence of moving a comma over a total of two words, an act of carelessness which seems, alas, to have been mine. The sentence should read: "There was no unemployment insurance, until 1933 no effort to increase job opportunities . . ." As your informed and careful readers will know, unemployment compensation was a rather later development of the New Deal.

*John Kenneth Galbraith*
*Harvard University*

## Fairlie's Kennan

*To the editors:*

Henry Fairlie's somewhat savage attack on George F. Kennan, ("Mr. X²," *TNR*, Dec. 24 & 31, 1977) is both sad in form and substance.

Kennan has not always been clairvoyant. Has anyone? Judgment about Soviet intentions has been modified by Kennan. He perceives ebb and flow. Again, he appears to be correct: it is illusory to entertain the notion that the Soviet Union poses *presently* any military threat to the United States. Yes, Kennan is an elitist: so is every self made man who casually draws from his own experience. It hardly aids Fairlie in his analysis to cite Dean Acheson on Kennan. Acheson was wrong, time and time again. Indeed, he was the consummate elitist who mistook graduation from Yale as an unassailable credential. National interest looms critically in governmental action, despite Fairlie's deprecation of Kennan's maintenance of this political axiom. Wisely, George F. Kennan comprehends that there are in fact limits to power and its uses in international politics. In short, euphemistically, Fairlie has been unfair to Kennan. Kennan's many notable insights will long be recalled by students of diplomacy, history and Soviet behavior.

*Elliott A. Cohen*
*Pomona, New York*

*To the editors:*

English reportage is sometimes known more for persiflage than profundity, for ad hominem nastiness than wit, for toadyism than independent thought. Henry Fairlie's attack on George Kennan well exemplifies these characteristics.

I am not exactly sure who Henry Fairlie is—my vague impression is that he is an expatriate English reporter—and I certainly do not know how old he is. But if rigidity of ideas and confusion of thought are symptoms of senility, surely it is Mr. Fairlie who is senile rather than George Kennan.

No doubt Kennan's ambiguity in his "Mr. X" article and his evaluations of the Soviet Union in the early 1950s contributed to our Cold War obsession. Still, Kennan had the perspicacity, the honesty and the courage to take contrary positions when he saw that both the Soviet Union and the world had changed. This is considerably more than can be said for Mr. Fairlie, who only reiterates the stale Cold War verbiage he learned from his friends in earlier administrations.

Fairlie derides Kennan's view that Brezhnev is "a moderate." His reasoning—if that is the word—seems to be that under Brezhnev the Soviet Union suppresses some "dissidents." The implication is that Kennan is disinterested in "human rights." Fairlie shows as much ignorance of Soviet reality and of Kennan's concerns as he does of logic. The fact that Brezhnev does not embrace American precepts of democracy has nothing to do with his being "a moderate"—in the Soviet context. Even on "human rights," Brezhnev is a moderate, comparatively. But what Kennan is referring to, obviously, is Brezhnev's position on foreign policy and on cooperation with the United States in the interest of avoiding war.

As far as "human rights" are concerned, Kennan is convinced—correctly, I think—that the present American policy of needling the Kremlin on this issue can only backfire—as it has already; that the only way we can contribute to a broadening of individual political freedom in the Soviet Union is by working for a further relaxation of international tensions. Does Mr. Fairlie—or anyone else—have evidence to the contrary?

The fact is that perceptions of many Americans of the Soviet Union are still distorted by a simplistic Cold War psychology according to which Moscow poses an overriding military threat to the United States. It is this view, advanced, as Fairlie says, by a group known as the Committee on the Present Danger, which Kennan opposes. Fairlie says he does not want to "take part in that debate," but if his article was not stimulated by these people its implications are clearly in support of their views.

Fairlie criticizes Kennan for being "obsessed" with the Soviet Union. It is, really, the Committee on the Present

*(continued on page 39)*



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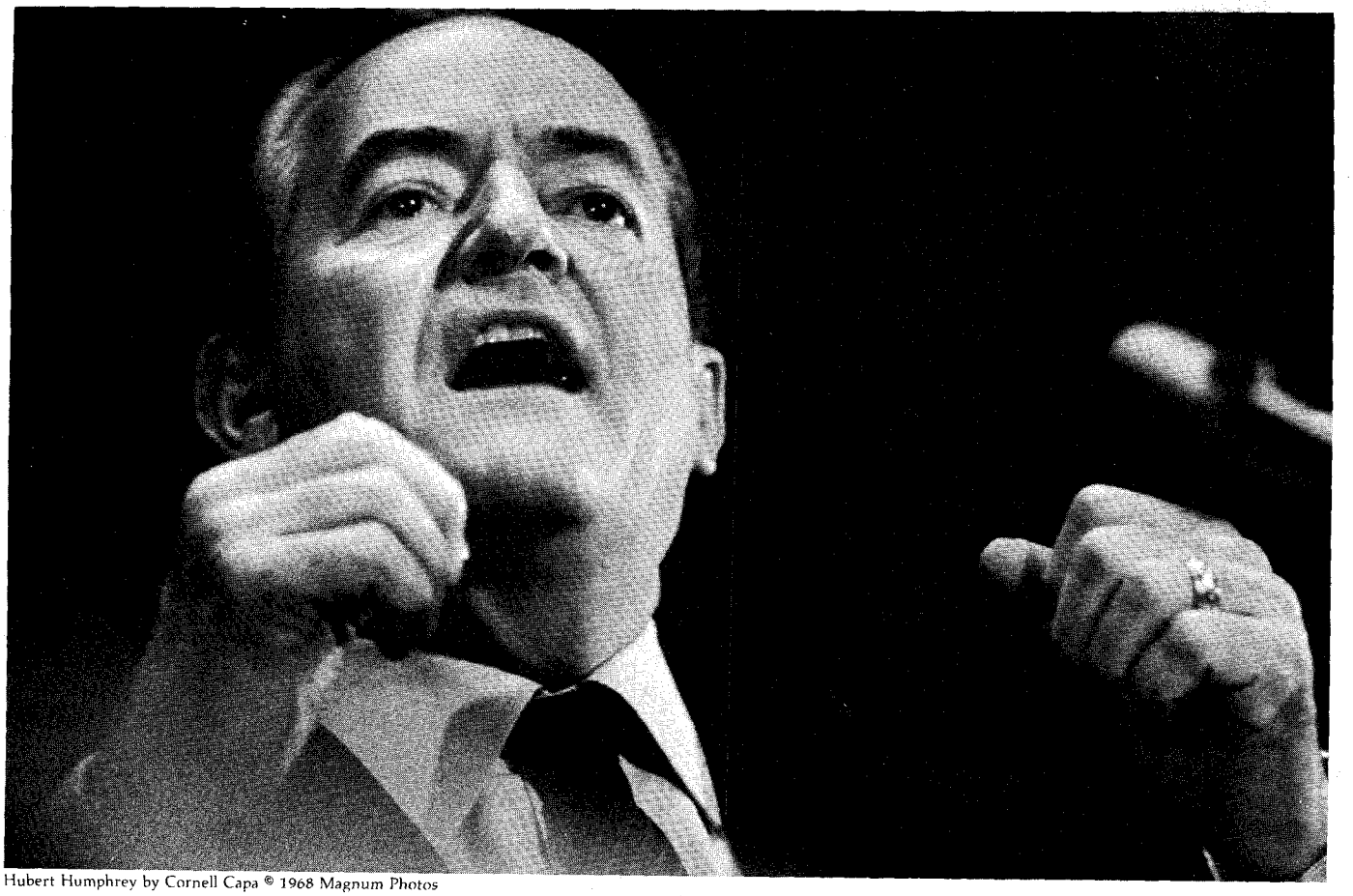
THE NEW REPUBLIC
January 28, 1978

# "Before the fact is the dream"

When we have praised Hubert Humphrey for being a good man, a decent man, a courageous man, a liberal, a champion of the oppressed and the underdog, of "the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind," there remains the politician. He was active—and for once one must give the word its full weight—in politics for 35 years. He lived politics, breathed politics, ate politics. He himself said: "Politics, more than most other careers, requires constant attention. Success requires monomania. Politics intrudes on and defines your life style." What impelled him was a desire to use the political system to get things done by the exercise of political skills that a politician had learned by experience. "Even the quiescent periods, between elections, are filled with power plays, choices, shifting friendships, new adversaries, constant loyalties." These words are those of a compleat politician.

In his 1976 autobiography, *The Education of a Public Man*, he is repeatedly critical of the "pure" liberals in Congress with whom he tried to work. This



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autobiography (which has all the marks of having been written by himself, with whatever assistance from others) is one of the few books by an American politician which gives an illuminating description of the actual working of politics. It is perhaps one of the most lasting parts of his legacy. Some of the liberals in the Senate in 1948, he said, "then as now, demanded a purity of performance that is virtually beyond human capability." He accused such liberals of being happy only when they lost, and unhappy when they won, for their interest lies only in persuading themselves that they are always in the right. "There are those who live by the strict rule that whatever they think right is necessarily right. They will compromise on nothing. They insist that everyone follow their thinking," and "the wrath of the intellectual liberal" at those who are willing to compromise to secure some worthwhile gain "is something unbounded." Yet characteristically he added that these "self-appointed moralists, the secular theologians who would create the heavenly city on earth by fiat, . . . are irritating but indispensable."

The essence of the man's life is in such passages. He would get things done, even if it was not all that he wished to be done. "Compromise is not a dirty word. . . . There are times, of course, when it is better to lose than to be partially successful. . . .But to make losing a habit in the name of moral principle or liberal conviction is to fail to govern and to demonstrate the incapacity to persuade and convince and to develop a majority." Humphrey wished the Senate to be "a legislating body and not merely a debating society," and few men served this vision so completely.

That is the lesson that Humphrey's life has to teach: that it is possible to engage in the necessary compromises of political life, and 30 years later to have adequately clean hands—we need not falsify our tributes to him—and be able to point to an accumulation of achievement which has very few parallels in our time. When he at last enjoyed a position of real influence as Senate majority whip, and was a member of John Kennedy's breakfast meetings to form legislative strategy, Humphrey felt that, "To be involved at the highest level of government in fashioning these [social] programs, to be there at their creation, made my juices flow. Objectives I had talked about for so long, I could, as part of that breakfast group, help to make real."

The length of his political career also matters, at a time when political experience is not highly regarded, perhaps especially in the White House. He learned his lessons early, and learned them well. Between his first unsuccessful and first successful campaign to be mayor of Minneapolis, he turned his attention to "understanding the people behind the [formal structure of the city government), those who caused the government to operate. . . .Then I set out to meet them—bankers, publishers, businessmen of other sorts—and at the same time I strengthened my association with labor." was an extraordinary political achievement for s young a man to bring together the Democratic Part and the Farmer-Labor Party in Minnesota—the basis c his own election in 1948 as the first Democrat to b elected to the US Senate from Minnesota since it ha been made a state in 1858—and there was a calculate skill as well as determination in his expulsion of th Communists from the Democratic-Farmer-Labo Party, with the help of Philip Murray of the CIO.

He had already learned his lesson in his firs campaign for mayor. "There were liberal aldermen wh couldn't have cared less about helping, particularly when it appeared that I had no chance." Some year later in the Senate, he was organizing liberal suppor for a resolution opposed by the Democratic leadership which meant Lyndon Johnson. When he showed tc Johnson a list of Senators on whom he was relying Johnson said with a shake of his head: "You don't have those Senators. . . .You ought to quit fooling arounc with people you can't depend on." Johnson then agreec to at least one of Humphrey's requests, and told him tc "go back and tell your liberal friends that you're the one to talk to me . . . and we can get some things done."

Here is "the education of a public man": the compleat politician being formed. He had already proved his skill when he drove his civil rights plank through the Democratic Convention in 1948. His idealism and determination were high, but the eulogists forget what is equally important: that he worked closely and with patience to obtain the support of Ed Flynn, the Boss of the Bronx, who then brought in the support of other bosses, David Lawrence of Pennsylvania, Jake Arvey of Cook County and John Bailey of Connecticut. The whole Eastern seaboard voted for the amendment moved by a young western mayor. In arguing for his plank, Humphrey pointed out that the Republicans already had adopted a lukewarm civil rights plank in their own platform: to throw the issue to them would be the height of folly. There was a politician.

So he continued to the end. "Conservatives and Southerners in the Senate took the trouble to know its rules"; too many liberals did not. "The code of behavior [in the Senate] makes sense. . . . You keep your word. . . . You do not embarrass a man through trickery or double cross." This applies as much to the opposition as to anyone: "You work as openly and honestly with your opponents as you do with your own political colleagues," especially if there are votes to win. "The Southerners, more than most of us, operated with good manners, a sense of graciousness. . . .Graciousness and good manners do not excuse bigotry. . . .But bad manners and ungraciousness make any resolution of differences far more difficult." Implicitly, this is again a criticism of some too self-righteous liberals.

All of this is at least as interesting, and as deserving of praise, as the idealism and decency of the man. He worked at being a politician, dedicated his life to politics,



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nd so wrought his achievements, "brick by brick," as e says—not to build utopia now, "but an approxima- on to utopia." But finally one must ask what held him traight to his course, through all the compromises, so hat at his death all were aware of a political life ollowed with unusual consistency? He tells of a emark made by his father. "Before the fact is the lream." That is his own epitaph. Through all the shoals of political life, which he did not disdain to negotiate, eeking compromise here and reconciliation there, the lream never faded. This dream held him true for 35 ears, and from it came the fact of his achievements as a olitician.

## "Meddling" in Italy

While in Paris earlier this month, President Carter had expressed his hope to French Socialist leader François Mitterrand that the Union of the Left between Socialists and Communists in France, that broke down in September, would not be reconstituted. A few days later, in a statement aimed primarily at Italy, the administration expressed the United States's desire to see "Communist influence in any Western European country reduced," and conviction that Communists do not share the "profound democratic values and interests" which are held by Italy and America. Some now accuse the Carter administration of interfering in the internal affairs of European countries.

Rarely has an American government strained as hard as this one to avoid the slightest hint of foreign meddling. Last week's statement declared once more the administration's view that "our Western European allies are sovereign countries and, rightly and properly, the decision on how they are governed rests with their citizens alone." But Carter's words to Mitterrand and the statement on Italy and European Communism were hardly platonic; they were designed to bolster democratic forces and sentiments in Europe and to remind our allies that the United States is legitimately concerned about political developments in their countries.

The words of the President of the United States undeniably produce effects in foreign countries, although perhaps not always the intended ones. To that extent, any time the President expresses an opinion about events abroad he may be charged with "interference." But silence also produces an effect. As *The New York Times* noted about the admonition to Mitterrand, it might be irresponsible for the United States to fail to express its opinions clearly to its allies.

For reasons that include willful distortion by some segments of the French and Italian press as well as a certain confusion in administration statements, many Western Europeans had gotten the impression that the United States no longer feels strongly about Communist participation in their governments. Carter's Notre Dame speech, in which he happily announced that we had outgrown our "inordinate fear of Communism," supported this impression, as did Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's musing to an Italian journalist that European Communism might prove more threatening to the Soviet Union than to the United States. Several official statements to the contrary and energetic conversations with leading political figures by Ambassadors Richard Gardner in Rome and Arthur Hartman in Paris did not sufficiently counteract the growing impression of American indifference. This misperception of the administration's real position was becoming a factor in politics, especially in Italy, where formerly hard-line Christian Democrats have recently been making overtures to the powerful Communist party. These people appeared to be convinced that Carter would not raise an eyebrow if, for example, the Communists were brought into the Parliamentary majority coalition or even into the Cabinet itself.

The administration statement already appears to be having its intended effect. The Directorate of the Christian Democratic Party has expressed its desire to exclude the Communists from participation in both the Cabinet and the parliamentary majority in any future government. This position is being challenged by Socialists, Republicans and of course the Communists themselves in the consultations now under way to form a new government in Italy following Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti's resignation last Monday. It is very unlikely that the Christian Democrats would have taken such a firm position without the clarification of the American policy.

The administration statement and its effect are not "interference in the internal affairs of Italy." Most of those who have complained about the administration statement do so either out of confusion or because they favor greater Communist participation, and not because of any great scruples about respecting Italian sovereignty. If the US statement constitutes "meddling," then the Soviet Union has been meddling in Italy with a vengeance, by financing the Italian Communist party and by repeated harangues in *Pravda* over the past few weeks demanding the downfall of the Andreotti government and the creation of a government of "national emergency" including the Communists.

The only real question about the Carter administration's statement is why it is so late in coming. The Italian situation has been worsening for months. Carter gave Andreotti a hero's welcome in Washington last summer, and scrupulously refrained from raising the Communist question either in public or in private. Italians, especially those who are tired of their long struggle to keep Communists out of the government, could be permitted to draw the conclusion that the



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United States was not too worried. Now the Italians are attempting to form a new government. The Communists are very likely to gain further concessions from the Christian Democrats. The Carter administration is quite right to be worried, and quite right to say so. *The New York Times* argued last week that only the Italians themselves can weigh the risks and advantages of admitting the Communists into the government against the risks and advantages of not doing so. But surely they cannot weigh those risks sensibly without knowing the views of their most important ally.

## Still Puffing, Joe?

Following the bellicose example of his commander-in-chief, HEW Secretary Joseph Califano went into the breach once more on January 11 and declared a war on smoking, "public health enemy number one." With the energy war under way, that makes two wars we've started in less than a year, a risky bit of aggression even if God is always on our side. Certainly God must be on Califano's side. Joe gave up smoking two and a half years ago. Now that he's seen the light, he insists that no one else asks for one.

Specifically he calls for stiffer no-smoking regulations in federal buildings; for more anti-smoking announcements on television; for the FDA to require warnings against smoking on birth control pills; and for smoking to be discouraged in schools and banned on airlines. So far his proposals have been greeted by two cheers from the American Cancer Society and the Group Against Smokers' Pollution (guess); and a screaming protest from smokers, libertarians, smoking libertarians, smoking libertarian stewardesses and the American Tobacco Institute. The Kentucky House passed a resolution calling for Califano's resignation, 65 to 14.

Califano's resignation is too much to ask—and to be fair, the nation might be equally well served by the resignation of the Kentucky House—but it is not too much to ask that Califano get off and stay off that pulpit that has become the symbol of the Carter administration. Even the angels, who must have rejoiced at Joe's conversion, yea as they rejoiced at Brother Flynt's, must be getting sick and tired of the constant flow of messages from the Carter people. Earthlings tend to be even more cynical about such things, especially when they hear a Cabinet officer, given to calling press conferences every 15 minutes, label those who oppose his Word as a "self-interested minority."

There's no doubt that the cigarette industry is self-interested, and in a minority; and there's little doubt that smoking is bad for us; and there may be some doubt that Califano spouts off on subjects like smokin in order to establish himself as the one memorabl HEW Secretary in history. But doubts aside, what, ma we parishioners ask, do Califano's declarations have t do with the right and proper management of HEW?

Isn't there something else Joe ought to be doing, now that he's got his wind back? Aren't there a few wrinkles left in the welfare program, near perfect as it is? Ever with the recent brainstorm of Assistant Secretary for Education, Mary Berry, to remodel our educational system on China's, is there no room for some slight improvements—a decision on uniforms, lunches?

As for matters of the body, despite the President's recent assertion that Califano is "responsible for the nation's health," aren't there some immediate tasks to attend to, such as hospital costs and medical insurance, to say nothing of supporting medical researchers who deal in science rather than sermons?

It must be tough working in HEW these days. First, Carter walks in and tells the staff to get married. Then Mondale comes by and tells the staff to raise a family. Now Joe says don't smoke. It must almost be enough to make one long for the days when Joe was back in the Pentagon, working for another war that was also holy and just.

## The Wicked Witch is Dead

The tactic of splitting India's historic Congress Party worked once for Indira Gandhi in her ceaseless quest for personal power. In 1969, two years after becoming Prime Minister, she found herself blocked by Congress Party foes from naming her hand-picked candidate to be ceremonial President of India. Rather than yield, she broke the party in two. Her part was bigger and her action served to give her commanding authority over the party, and through it, over India. This was not enough power to suit Mrs. Gandhi. No amount ever is. After triumphantly winning re-election in 1971, she used all of India's state machinery to consolidate her control. She used the economic powers of the state to reward her friends and she doubled the size of police agencies to harass her enemies. She fired anyone who was not a yes-man.

And still it was not enough. In June 1975, she declared emergency rule and jailed more than 150,000 people, including all her political enemies. The press was censored. Prisoners were tortured. Her son, Sanjay, who had been elected to nothing, became a virtual Crown Prince of what had been the world's largest democracy. She called elections last March, believing she could not lose, and lost, disastrously, to a coalition of opposition groups. The leader of the coalition, Morarji Desai, was her principal rival in 1969.



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Now he is Prime Minister.

Mrs. Gandhi has reverted to her old tactic in a new bid for a power base. On New Year's Day she again split the Congress. She did so with a tasteless, shameless publicity flourish—calling her political convention the very day that the government of India was welcoming President Carter on a state visit. This time, however, the major leaders of the party refused to follow her. Meantime, she arrogantly refused to testify before a

Andras Goldinger

judicial commission investigating the excesses of her emergency rule, and she may be prosecuted for contempt. President Carter, in his speech to the Indian parliament, compared Mrs. Gandhi's electoral defeat to Richard Nixon's resignation as a victory for democracy. Carter's remarks were greeted with thunderous applause. We think the comparison is apt, and we trust that Mrs. Gandhi is now as permanently out of power in India as the Shadow of San Clemente is in the United States.

How Averell Harriman and Cyrus Vance affected the 1968 election.

# Humphrey's Turning Point

In the late spring of 1968, Vice President Hubert Humphrey's campaign for the presidency against Richard Nixon had not officially been launched, but was already in trouble. For reasons that never have been satisfactorily explained, this appeared to be a matter of indifference, if not satisfaction, to President Lyndon Johnson. The problem was Vietnam—the very one that had convinced LBJ that he would be prudent to retire from the White House. In particular, Humphrey's problem was whether to disassociate himself from the administration's attempt to bomb North Vietnam into serious peace negotiations. It was a difficult choice involving, as it did, a decision either to abandon the President or to imply his approval of a policy for which he had little enthusiasm and over which he had virtually no influence.

In June 1968 Humphrey had made this decision. He had a speech in hand that advocated an immediate, total bombing halt and, as I recall, a cease fire. He was anxious to deliver this before the Democratic party's platform drafting committee meeting scheduled for late July. Humphrey knew that such a speech would mark a break with the President on Vietnam and would undermine Lyndon Johnson's insistence that the drafting committee ride along with the Administration's bombing policy. Humphrey, I was told by a member of his entourage, had decided to stand up to LBJ on this issue as a personal declaration of independence.

Humphrey had only two related concerns about his public break with the administration's war policy. One was that his advocacy of a bombing halt would destroy the chance of a breakthrough at the peace talks in Paris, where Averell Harriman and Cyrus Vance for the United States were then meeting with North Vietnam's representatives. Despite President Johnson's claim that his Vice President was being kept closely informed of the talks in Paris, Humphrey actually was told little. For all he knew, a breakthrough was imminent and his speech might thwart it. Humphrey's second problem was Lyndon Johnson himself. No matter what the true situation, Johnson, in his present mood, would be likely to claim that Humphrey had thrown away a trump negotiations card. The American delegation would surely be queried on this point by the press. If Harriman and Vance felt Humphrey's speech would not affect the negotiations, it was important that they be willing to say so publicly.

I was then a consultant to Governor Harriman. Before my departure for Paris in early June, Robert Nathan, Humphrey's chief policy adviser, asked me to press Harriman and Vance about whether Humphrey's advocacy of a bombing halt would jeopardize their efforts—and, if not, whether they would be willing to say so.

When I arrived in Paris I put the question to Harriman and Vance, both close friends and strong political supporters of Humphrey. Although they, themselves, favored an immediate bombing halt and cease fire and were becoming increasingly impatient with Johnson's rigid stance, they were reluctant to embarrass the President by what, in effect, would be a public endorsement of Humphrey's position. They also felt that there was still some hope that LBJ might accept a proposition their staff was then preparing that involved an early, complete bombing halt. Humphrey's



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speech, they said, might only stiffen Johnson's adamant refusal to halt the bombing. So neither Harriman nor Vance felt he could take Humphrey off the hook, even though, as we all glumly agreed, this might cost him the election.

I returned to Washington a few days later and met with Larry O'Brien, Humphrey's campaign manager. The platform committee was already preparing for a battle royal over the bombing question. If Humphrey could make his speech it would clear the air, would put the Vice President on the side of those whom he respected and whose support he wanted, and would demonstrate that he intended to be his own master. O'Brien and I had a long, agitated session. In the end, he agreed that without the willingness of Harriman and Vance to say that Humphrey's call for a bombing halt would not hurt the American negotiating position, the speech should be shelved. It was.

In hindsight, Humphrey's speech probably would not have made any difference in Paris, and his early waffling on the bombing issue hurt his chances, possibly critically. Humphrey, so far as I know, never mentioned this incident publicly. He made the agonizing decision in good grace on the assumption that his political fortunes should be given lesser priority than the prospect for an early agreement on Vietnam. Hubert H. Humphrey prided himself on being a good politician. Some of us knew years ago that he was also a statesman.

**Chester L. Cooper**

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What's good for Mobil and Exxon is good for the NAACP?

# Black Power

The NAACP, America's largest civil rights organization and a bulwark of support for liberal public policies since the New Deal, has weighed in against President Carter's top legislative priority—his energy package. It's not the first instance of blacks' dissatisfaction with the President they strongly backed in the primaries and general election. Last summer, National Urban League president Vernon Jordan sharply criticized the administration for its anemic approach to jobs and the cities, and that organization has now dissented once more on the President's tax proposals. The Congressional Black Caucus has visited the Oval Office from time to time, always to urge more and quicke government action to reduce the staggering blacl unemployment statistics.

But the NAACP statement takes a radically differen and wholly unpredictable tack. Drafted by an 18 member task force, the statement faults nearly every major aspect of Carter's deadlocked energy plan as reflecting the absence of "a black perspective." It argues that black gains come during periods of economic expansion, which in turn depend on energy availability and consumption.

Carter's emphasis on conservation, the NAACP says, erodes a society of expanding opportunities. The NAACP statement endorses the development of nuclear power, including the breeder reactor, which the Carter plan opposes. Government incentives to oil companies to encourage future exploration for new energy sources are inadequate, the report says. The Carter plan's prohibitions on industrial uses of oil and natural gas will cause a shift of job-producing industries away from urban areas where most blacks live and work. And, finally, the report argues that deregulation of prices for new oil and gas is necessary to stimulate the development of new supplies. What we need, said the NAACP's new chairman, Margaret Bush Wilson, is a new kind of alliance between "Big Government, the Big Minority and Big Oil." A few days after the original energy statement was released, Bush confirmed the new drift by attacking proposed new fuel economy standards for small trucks and vans on grounds they would cause industry shut-downs and thereby deprive blacks of jobs.

Quick to embrace a useful ally in a tough fight, *The Wall Street Journal* endorsed the policy shift as a sign that a major spokesman for black interests has turned a corner, away from knee-jerk governmental solutions and toward the idea that "nothing competes with a vibrant market economy in providing upward social mobility."

There is no question that the energy statement represents a sharp break with the NAACP's usual stands on public policy, and that fact has stimulated plenty of speculation about what lies behind the move. Some suggest a basic frustration with oversold, underfunded government programs of the past quarter of a century, along with a newer disenchantment with liberal allies who now break ranks with blacks over environmental issues and the effects of reverse discrimination. By breaking with tradition and adopting the industry line on energy, it is said, the NAACP hopes to promote a quid pro quo of a different sort: greater profits for the oil companies will produce greater industry investment and hence more jobs in urban areas. That is indeed an act of faith.

Others advance a conspiracy theory of sorts. The task force that prepared the report, and especially the sub-group directly involved in its drafting, was dominated by black business executives who work for



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or lobby for the oil companies. The head of that group was James Stewart, a retired executive of the Oklahoma Natural Gas Company. The chairman of the task force on supply was Robert Bates, formerly an aide to Sen. Edward Kennedy and now a Washington lobbyist for Mobil Oil. Affiliations of Bates's task force members reads like an oil industry registry—Standard Oil of California, Atlantic-Richfield, Southern California Gas, Consolidated Edison of New York City. The statement, especially its endorsement of deregulation, left the NAACP hierarchy in a minor turmoil. Some board members claimed they had not meant to vote for deregulation, others claimed they actually had not voted that way. And still others demanded a new meeting and a new statement. Outside the NAACP, it looked very much like the oil industry had cozied up and snuck one over or perhaps even had bought itself an ally.

There's no direct evidence to support that charge, but it is clear that the NAACP's justification for parroting the industry line on energy is pretty thin. First, to reject conservation on grounds that it will cost jobs is ridiculous. Avoidance of waste, in fact, would be a source of jobs right in the inner cities where blacks need them most—installing heat exchangers in factories and putting insulation in houses just to cite a couple of examples. Then, too, energy waste is a major culprit in the $30 billion trade deficit which produces economic consequences and sets limits on government programs that directly affect blacks and other urban poor. It is certainly true that blacks have made their most dramatic gains during periods of economic prosperity, but conservation is also a key factor in future growth. No one any longer believes we immediately face the physical limits of energy supplies, and there is ample energy for growth available in what would be saved by curtailing national waste, now estimated at up to 50 percent in some areas. If anything has been costly to jobs in the cities over the past few years, surely the refusal of oil companies to release gas on the interstate market must be counted as a factor of major importance.

Finally, nothing is more illusory than the claim that by deregulating prices and giving the industry greater incentives for exploration you will thereby produce more jobs for blacks. The number of blacks employed in oil and gas is proportionally small, and the jobs associated with exploration and refining are neither labor intensive nor located in urban areas where black employment problems are most severe. What deregulation will produce, however, and nearly everyone concedes as much, is higher—much higher—energy prices. The last time there was a major energy price increase, it merely meant that blacks, along with all other Americans, had to pay more for natural gas, heating oil, and gasoline. Those were only the direct costs. The price increases of 1973-74 also stimulated inflation, stymied growth, and contributed greatly to unemployment. In short, they helped produce a recession. So it's no surprise that when deregulation came before the US House last year, 13 of the 14 members of the Congressional Black Caucus voted against it. In fact, there is no such thing as deregulation, and what the NAACP has to decide is whether it wants energy prices controlled by the government or by OPEC and the oil industry. In its new, pro-industry policy swerve, the country's largest civil rights organization has badly misplaced its confidence.

**Ken Bode**

## Who really wants a Department of Education?

# Stocking the Cabinet

America's educators are about to break out of their shackles and escape from confinement in the bowels of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, where they have languished for years. This year they plan to create their own independent Department of Education. That's what all the reports say, and the President's State of the Union Message—which is being delivered as we go to press—should confirm the reports. During the 1976 campaign, Carter promised he would liberate the E from HEW, and now he is making the promise again.

"Educators" are not teachers, but people who make up schemes and spend public funds in ways that are supposed to improve the quality of teaching. The US spends an enormous amount of money on education, but it has not paid much attention to the political concerns of educators, certainly not as much as they would like us to pay. Educators have been frustrated by the fact that the US has no national school system, and thus no central bureaucracy that might fight their causes and tap the federal treasury as deeply as they would like. Aid to education has increased rather modestly in the last 20 years, compared with increases in federal spending for health and welfare. HEW has installed vast clerkdoms to handle its Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, medical research and food and drug regulatory programs, but it has kept its education clerks under control. Now the educators say it is their turn. If big, stuffy bureaucracy is what you get when you're powerful, they want it.

At present, educators must make do with a measly commissioner and assistant secretary in HEW. They control a puny staff of 3700 and mere $10 billion in public funds. They envy other parts of the department that always grow fatter, even while programs for



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education stand still. They imagine that the health and welfare projects are actually feeding on money that should have been spent on education. They want to get out on their own.

The backers of the plan for an education department make it plain that they want more clout, more money and more bureaucracy. The National Education Association, a teachers union, is the biggest lobby that favors the plan. Its president, John Ryor, wrote that education will always be shortchanged if it remains in HEW. Most of the department's budget is made up of "uncontrollable" welfare costs that go up every year without any congressional review. When it comes time to pare the HEW budget, controllable items like aid to education get cut.

Local school systems are in desperate trouble, Ryor claimed, because they are supported by local taxes, which are the only taxes the ordinary citizen can vote against. Ryor wrote that people are "exercising what little power they feel they have left to shout *NO* to school budget increases. Local and state funds are drying up. Yet the local community pays 48.4 percent of the school dollar and the states pay 43.4 percent, while the federal share of the elementary and secondary school funding is 8.2 percent . . . . The full federal share should be one-third the costs of public education. But getting this kind of money from Congress is impossible if education does not have a powerful representative in the budgeting process."

That explains what the public schools want. Senators Ribicoff, Pell, Magnuson, Nunn and about 50 others have endorsed a bill that would give it to them. The House has not acted, but is ready to move once the President gives the word.

The opposition is a motley group. At the head is HEW Secretary Joseph Califano. He is not enthusiastic about a plan that would diminish his title by one-third and his budget by at least $10 billion. Like previous secretaries of HEW, he believes that taking education out of his jurisdiction would shatter the special relationship that exists between the H and the E and the W. Califano argued that the education division should be jazzed up, given more money and clout, but kept subservient to him. According to all reports, the President didn't buy Califano's argument.

The American Federation of Teachers, a rival union to the NEA, is another dedicated opponent. Its leader is Albert Shanker, and it is a part of the AFL-CIO. The NEA is independent. Shanker is against creating a new department because he thinks it would draw politica fire but not much more money from Congress. H would rather campaign for increased grants to educa tion through the present system than fight for a department that may turn out to be an expensive waste of time. Furthermore, as a member of the AFL-CIC executive board, Shanker opposes any plan that might split off sections of the Labor Department for inclusion in some separate agency that might not be so alert to the interests of organized labor. It would be particularly irritating to let an independent union like NEA—which surely would dominate the new department—get its hands on pieces of the Labor machinery. One Senate aide said the AFT is against having a department of education because the NEA is for it.

Finally there are the college lobbies. "Higher education," as it's called, damns the proposal with faint praise. Colleges receive large subsidies from the federal government already, but they collect the money from many different departments in the form of research contracts and grants. They get very little of HEW's education money, and are thankful that they don't have to deal with its bureaucrats. Yet, at the same time, colleges would like to have a cabinet officer to whom they could run, whose only concern would be to defend the cause of education whenever it is threatened. For example, the colleges would like to have someone to go to battle with the Treasury over tax treatment of non-profit institutions, and they would also like to have someone tug at the energy department for energy tax rebates. HEW's assistant secretary for education doesn't have the rank even to get into the club where such things are discussed.

The colleges are reluctant to lobby for a department of education, however, because they fear that, once unleashed, the monster might become their master. For one thing, colleges might lose the independence that chaos permits, and find that all their federal subsidies were being channeled through this one agency. People would notice how large the federal subsidies are, and they would notice how unevenly they are distributed. Second, an education department—unlike present sources of federal money such as the Pentagon—probably would be staffed by people with definite ideas about how a college should be run. The price of collecting your subsidy might be to conform to a bureaucrat's theories of education. That is why the college lobbyists are nervous about the future.

On November 28, 1977, the President's reorganization squad met with him to discuss three options they had worked up. The first choice was to create a narrow agency housing nothing more than the education elements of HEW. The President said, no, too narrow. The second choice was to create a big department, subsuming parts of Labor, HEW, the Veterans Administration, the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities and several other offices. Too broad, the President said. No. The third option was Califano's:

## White House Watch

John Osborne is on vacation this week and next week. He will return February 12 with an assessment of Carter's first year.



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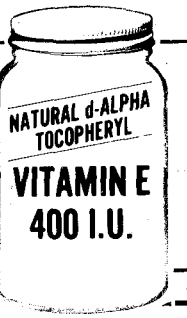


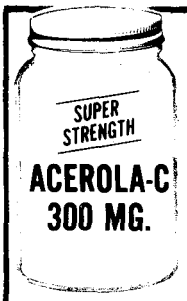


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keep it all in HEW, but pay more attention and give more money to education. The President decided he couldn't do that either. He had promised over and over during the campaign that he would create a new education department, and by golly, he's determined to do it. He even promised Rosalynn he would do it, and she passed the message along on national TV one recent Sunday morning.

At the end of the reorganization meeting last November, the President ran out of options without making a decision. But according to a White House aide who has been working on the project, Carter wants a new department. He just can't settle on the details or the timing of its creation. More studies may be on the way. And while the option makers grind away at their task, teachers will have to live without a bureaucracy they can call their own. The quality of education in America will not suffer, I think, no matter how long the delay.

**Eliot Marshall**

## On the Hill

# Feeding the Press

If you're not in the first congressional district of Kansas, you've probably never heard of Representative Keith Sebelius. That's all right with Dixie Dodd, his press secretary. "Wheat's our thing, and most people aren't interested in wheat," she says with a great voice more redolent of corn mash and tobacco than of Wonderbread. Dixie Dodd has her hands full keeping the 126 weekly newspapers in the first congressional district of Kansas apprised of Mr. Sebelius' activities. She isn't interested in national publicity.

On the other hand, there's Alan Madison, the 24-year-old press secretary to 28-year-old Representative Tom Downey of New York. Madison's eyes get all misty when he considers the phrase "President Downey," and willingly discusses the status of the quest.

"Tom's in the process of an identity crisis," Madison says. "He's become a national figure in the area of defense. There are times he exudes tremendous leadership. Then I see him on Fridays bringing his laundry in to take home to his mother in New York." Of course when you're a 28-year-old Congressman, that laundry stuff makes great copy. So, too, does an application to law school with a recommendation from Jimmy Carter. The press loved it.

Congressional press secretaries are a relatively new phenomenon. Terry Michael, Representative Paul Simon's press secretary and president of the 160-member Association of House Democratic Press Assistants, says, "A long-time Senate press aide told me that in 1963 there were only six Senators with full-time press secretaries. Now it's practically 100."

The rise of the press secretary is partially a response to the growth of the Washington press corps. In 1823, there were 12 Washington correspondents; in 1930, 251; in 1976, 2700. Obviously, someone has to give the press its daily feeding. But the congressional press secretary illustrates another truth of modern government besides the growth of the Washington establishment. This is the technique—available to legislators as well as Presidents—of gaining support for your viewpoint by going directly to the people, "over the heads" of their elected representatives.

Senator William Proxmire is especially proficient at this technique. Proxmire, who is the only senator without even one full-time press aide, nevertheless is one of the Senate's most visible members. Hill press secretaries respect Proxmire's office as the model of an effective press operation. The praise is often coupled with a derogatory reference to his "gimmickry," but this is said more with envy than with disdain.

When William Proxmire says that New York City's civil service workers are paid adequately and are keeping the city functioning, a great news peg is the fact that Proxmire spent a day as a New York City garbage collector. This stunt also got Proxmire national attention by supplying the press with a story during the news-starved Congressional recess.

Downey's man Al Madison proudly asserts, "We run our office like a newsroom." The Madison method has gotten results. For example, Downey got national attention for an investigation his office initiated of a Navy coverup concerning the deaths of two sailors in San Diego. Madison says Jack Anderson has called him desperately asking for some outrage Downey has come across so Anderson won't have to go on the air and say there were no outrages today. "We're almost solely a national operation," Madison says, meaning Downey gets on the CBS News and in *The New York Times*. "There is a trickle down effect from that as far as local coverage is concerned, though most of our district could care less that Tom is at SALT."

Waiting for their bosses' accomplishments to trickle down home is not a tactic employed by many press secretaries. One reason is that most Congressmen do nothing of enough significance for anything to trickle down from anywhere. For another, even though there are all those reporters out there, most of them aren't beating down the 535 congressional doors begging to know what's going on inside. So the press secretary must find ways to reassure the people back home that they elected the right person. The three most popular ways to attempt this feat are the press release, press releases and more press releases. There is a refinement on the press release known as an "actuality," which



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means a press release spoken by the congressman, recorded and fed to local radio stations.

"I weep once a day when I receive the press releases and I think of the number of trees that have been wasted," says Paul Houston, Washington correspondent for *The Los Angeles Times*. "One percent have any meaning or meat." Houston is somewhat severe. Most reporters claim they only throw out between 90 and 98 percent of the releases they receive. Paradoxically, all the press secretaries I talked to said they have never written a worthless release.

But there is a reason for the existence of the press release, besides proving the press secretary is hard at work. Although most releases delivered to the Washington press corps end up in Washington wastebaskets, those sent to copy-starved district newspapers often end up in print, usually verbatim.

One Congressman who's consistently praised for putting out press releases of merit, which also get turned into articles, is Les Aspin. Like Proxmire, Aspin has no designated press secretary but nevertheless conducts a high-powered press operation.

In Aspin's office each aide is responsible for the press on his or her individual project. Legislative Assistant Ed Schallert says, "Les just didn't want to be 'any congressman.' He wanted to be well known. He also had some issues he wanted to raise. When he first got on the Armed Services Committee, Hebert was the Chairman and was very dictatorial. The natural outlet was to go public. Unlike most congressmen Les doesn't put out releases which just say he made some statement—about which no one outside the district cares. Our releases usually include a study, which gives statistics and substance."

The latest Aspin study, which made *The Washington Post, The New York Times* and the wires (there is general agreement that if you want national attention and don't get picked up by AP or UPI, you're dead) showed how economical a SALT agreement will be. Like most Aspin studies it is impressively full of documentation, charts and graphs. You can see why the press takes this stuff seriously; it makes you feel you should either enroll at MIT or go back to bed.

Howard Shuman of Proxmire's office has the following advice for getting a release picked up. "I always mark it 'hold for release' and give a date two or three days from the time a reporter receives it. If you don't you might as well throw it out the window. One, because reporters are lazy, and two, because they need time to check out and write up what you've handed them."

Reporters say it is rare for a press secretary to have a voice in policy making. Most press secretaries are functionaries, an obstacle to be surmounted in order to get to the person the reporter really wants to talk to. Whether because of their low-man-on-the-totem-pole status, or the serendipitous nature of job hunting on the Hill, many press secretaries ended up where they are simply by "walking through the door."

It's nearly impossible for a press secretary to manufacture a Congressional image. But one reporter admits, "I've seen a press secretary make a difference. Senator Brooke's former press secretary, Hap Ellis, was such a funny, nice, good person that Brooke got the best press he's ever had. It had nothing to do with the Senator, it was a spillover from feelings about Hap. You can see the contrast now." When a Congressman is in the vortex of real events, and not those someone has tried to create, a press aide can do little more than be a filter for reporters' requests. Ron Kroese, Senator James Abourezk's press secretary, who looks as if he belongs behind the counter of a health food store, which is where he was before coming to work in Washington, was with Abourezk during the energy filibuster. "I didn't do very much then. There was no need for releases. When he'd step off the floor there would be 10 microphones in his face."

Dixie Dodd rarely has to deal with microphones in the face of her boss. But even doing p.r. for an unknown congressman not overwhelmed by ambition has its frustrations. "Lots of those 126 weeklies are run by old folks who can be awfully cantankerous. Often I have to call and dictate a release while they write it out longhand. Well, I called one paper, I didn't quite catch the name, and dictated a long release to an old man who wrote very slowly. When I finished dictating he read it back to me very slowly. Then there was a long pause. He said, 'What do you want me to do with it?' I said, 'Put it in the paper of course.' He said, 'What paper?' I said, 'Who is this?' He said, 'It's the Union Pacific Railroad Depot.'"

**Emily Yoffe**

*Emily Yoffe*, a former *TNR* intern, worked briefly as a congressional press secretary. She is now a Washington freelance writer.

The Chamorro assassination comes just as things seem to be getting a bit better in Nicaragua.

# Human Rights Payoff?

Shortly before he was assassinated on January 10 Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, the outspoken Nicaraguan opposition leader and newspaper publisher, sat in his office and expressed optimism about the American role in Nicaragua. Gesturing with his big hands, the tall, gruff opponent of one of Latin America's oldest authoritarian



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regimes credited the United States with forcing the government of General Anastasio Somoza Debayle to lift martial law and suspend press censorship four months ago. Chamorro believed that the Somoza dynasty, which has ruled Nicaragua for 42 years, had lost the support of the United States.

Actually, the Carter administration's performance in this Central American country has been less than consistent, and certainly less than brilliant. At one point last year, the US deferred economic loans intended to benefit the poor, while restoring cuts in military aid to the Somoza regime. These actions could only serve to delight General Somoza and confound his critics. But despite such ineptitude, the United States has managed, through Jimmy Carter's new emphasis on human rights, to place itself in a more neutral position in Nicaragua. The shift may have come none too soon, for the isolation of General Somoza from his own people now appears to be almost complete.

A West Point graduate whose flawless American English is felt to be much better than his Spanish, the Nicaraguan leader has boasted in the past that his only opposition consisted of a small group located at the far left of the political spectrum. But events following the Chamorro murder demonstrated the contrary. The crowds that surged into the streets of the Nicaraguan capital out of sympathy for Chamorro and in opposition to Somoza were large by any standard, and massive indeed when one considers the small size of Managua, a city without a center whose downtown area has remained mostly a collection of rubble and weeds since the great earthquake of 1972. A Somoza government investigation of the Chamorro killing pointed to a Cuban-American doctor whose blood plasma company had been attacked by Chamorro's newspaper. But many Nicaraguans believe that the government was somehow involved.

President Somoza told reporters after the killing, as he has in the past, that he will resign when his term expires in 1981. According to the Nicaraguan constitution, he cannot succeed himself. But most observers think that he and his family will find a way to retain power, either through continued control of the National Guard, the country's only military and police force, or through simpler means such as a revision of the constitution. General Somoza apparently would like his son, 27-year-old Anastasio Somoza III, a major in the National Guard, to succeed him, but there is considerable resistance to that idea. The son, who has been to both Harvard and Sandhurst, the British military college, is widely disliked for what many people describe as his arrogance. Arrogance is an understandable failing in a young man raised to treat the entire country as his family's private property. The Somozas are thought to own 80 to 100 companies, including the country's airline and steamship company and its third largest bank. They hold a leading position in the production of tobacco, rice, seafood, cattle and sugar. They own gold mines, a textile mill and the main television station. Somoza's uncle manages the national electric monopoly, ENALUF, which is notorious for its corruption. The uncle is known as "Tio Luz," or Uncle Light.

But despite Somoza's firm grip on the economy and his control of the National Guard, one other ingredient always has been essential to his rule—United States support. The US has been calling the shots for decades, directly participating in Nicaraguan kingmaking. The American envoy to Nicaragua has been more of a Roman-style proconsul than an ambassador. The intervention started back in the mid-19th century, when a North American adventurer named William Walker declared himself president. The US dispatched the Marines in 1912 and they occupied the country for nearly two decades. The Marines trained the National Guard, which still sends its top officers to the US Army School of the Americas in the Panama Canal Zone. With the departure of the Marines, the US turned over political power to General Somoza's father. The family has been running things ever since. No wonder then that many Nicaraguans would look first to the Americans before pursuing their opposition to Somoza.

The United States shift to a more neutral position has occurred at a time when Somoza is under attack from several sources. Last year, seven Roman Catholic bishops condemned the "state of terror" that the National Guard has imposed on the peasants. The church had compiled extensive evidence of Guard killings, torture and rapes in the countryside. Violent opposition to the Somoza regime increased as well; the Sandinist National Liberation Front, a leftist guerrilla group which got its start fighting the US Marines, launched attacks recently on several National Guard posts. Amnesty International condemned the regime's treatment of prisoners. Experts testifying before a US House of Representatives subcommittee questioned whether US economic development aid was really benefiting the poor in Nicaragua. What made General Somoza appear more vulnerable than anything else, however, was the heart attack he suffered last summer.

Nicaragua has come to be something of a test case for President Carter's human rights policy. Nicaragua's government has been a creation and responsibility of the United States. Its human rights abuses have been shocking by any standard. The concentration of

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economic and political power in a single family in Nicaragua has few parallels in the history of the hemisphere, while the country's levels of malnutrition, illiteracy and infant mortality are high even by Latin American standards. Human rights activists in the United States believe that if the Carter administration cannot succeed in influencing conditions in this small country, then it is unlikely to succeed anywhere. The United States does not have strategic interests in Nicaragua that would militate against its turning on the pressure.

US Embassy officials say they now see themselves as "catalysts" in the situation, favoring an easing of government repression. Relations with the Somoza regime are described as "under a bit of strain," and this is not considered unhealthy. Although $2.5 million in military assistance has been authorized by Congress, American officials insist that none of it will be actually disbursed to Nicaragua unless there is improvement in the human rights situation. The new American ambassador, Mauricio Solaun, makes an unlikely proconsul. He is a bespectacled, soft-spoken former professor of Latin American politics and history.

In addition to helping bring an end to martial law and press censorship, United States pressure on the Somoza government seems to have had some impact in the countryside. The National Guard appears to have grown more careful and selective in its repression. The American Capuchin missionaries, who had drawn up a list of more than 350 people seized by the National Guard in the northeastern part of the country who had simply "disappeared" after their capture, now say that there seems to be less outright killing on the part of the Guard.

But reports of brutality continue to come in from remote parts of the country. Rene Espinosa Pineda, a driver and mechanic for the National Guard, testified recently in an affidavit that he had seen, in secret government detention centers, 26 prisoners whom the government had earlier denied holding, and that he had witnessed the sexual torture of a peasant youth by a National Guard officer *after* the lifting of the state of siege. Mr. Espinosa also stated that he had seen, in separate detention facilities, two persons whom the authorities had consistently denied having imprisoned and whose cases had become a cause célèbre in Managua, thanks partly to front-page publicity provided by Pedro Joaquin Chamorro's newspaper, *La Prensa*. The couple, Juan Francisco Tijerino and Esmeralda Rivera de Tijerino, and their four children were arrested without charges on December 7, 1976. Mr. Tijerino's mother aroused interest in their case by trying to obtain justice through every possible legal method available to her. None of the officials she approached over a year claimed to know of her son and daughter-in-law. Had the courts been functioning properly, her writ of habeas corpus would have led to the immediate disclosure of their imprisonment and whereabouts.

Jimmy Carter has made a beginning in Nicaragua. He still has a long, long way to go.

**Daniel Southerland**

*Daniel Southerland* is the diplomatic correspondent of the *Christian Science Monitor*.

Pretenders to the Throne, III

# Proteus Californias

## by Roger Morris

Like no other politician since John Kennedy, he passes comfortably across the shifting class distinctions in American political imagery. To the educated he has seemed cynical yet reflective, sharing their contempt for vulgar power. With the hip of various subclasses he shares a certifiable taste for Buddha and Elvis Presley. (The death of the latter idol last August was marked by a solemn gubernatorial eulogy explaining the beneficial impact of rock and roll on American culture.) For the common majority whose pastime is frustration, he presents the gratifying example of a spartan young ruler who drives an unwashed 1974 Plymouth and hates bureaucrats and welfare chiselers just like anybody else. All this and what *Newsweek* admiringly calls "his cool genius for where the votes are."

It is indeed a constituency to conjure with. These



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images, if not the realities, have made California Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr. the most conspicuous threat to Jimmy Carter's renomination in 1980. After a close election in 1974—in which, like Carter in 1976, he lost an early lead of more than 20 points in the polls—Brown has become one of the most popular governors in California history. With public approval hovering consistently near 80 percent, he stands to be reelected overwhelmingly this year and thus to be well positioned for a run at the early presidential primaries in 1980. In its discontent with Carter, let alone its enduring fascination with Brown, much of the press has already begun to treat the governor as the heir appropriate. Yet at 39, after eight telling years on the public record, Jerry Brown is no longer quite the attractive enigma of his press notices. His pretense to the presidency may turn out to be less novel, and less promising, than it has seemed.

No other statehouse regime in recent history arrived with such self-conscious promotion, or to such auspicious national attention, as Brown's in Sacramento did three years ago. He had waged a conventionally reticent, sometimes unsavory campaign as his poll margin dwindled, but the new governor took office with an austere eccentricity that proved politically brilliant. Over its first months, his administration seemed to touch every major chord in the deepening antipolitics of the public. It was to be the "era of limits," Brown pronounced, pleasing both left and right in their disparate but merging disdain for government institutions and intervention. Suddenly the governor of the state was seen fighting government salary raises, including his own and his staff's; saving a well publicized $153,000 a year by refusing to buy briefcases for the bureaucrats; asking awkard, caustic and thus widely popular questions of ruling bodies like the University Board of Regents. He appointed to important state agencies not only a predictable sampling of campaign retainers and friends, but also former poverty lawyers, consumer advocates, environmentalists and chicano activists, some with glittering academic credentials and most popularly accepted for their generic opposition to past governments if not for their more liberal views. Early in his tenure Brown also met a major campaign promise to an important California Democratic constituency, skillfully maneuvering through the legislature a long-overdue law granting farm workers the right to select a union in secret ballot.

But it was the personal asceticism and apparent intellect of Brown himself, the former Catholic seminarian and reforming lawyer, that became for many a symbol, and perhaps a substitute, for the tangible politics of his governorship. In acts that became nationwide news, he turned in Ronald Reagan's limousine for a modest Plymouth, and spurned an extravagant gubernatorial mansion 13 miles from the capitol for a mattress on the floor of a $250-a-month apartment across from his office. He also, aides and visiting reporters never tired of exclaiming, reads and thinks. The official ethic was said to be derived from his own Zen Catholicism of sacrifice and official humility. And just as the governor was visible harassing the bureaucrats, he was reported admonishing his labor advisors to study a Zen commune in northern California for the secrets of a jobs policy. There was also a secular creed. Its chief source was E.F. Schumacher, a formerly obscure British Coal Board economist whose 1966 essay "Buddhist Economics" and later book, *Small is Beautiful,* articulated an anti-growth, anti-technocratic humanism long familiar in English socialist thought, adopted with late enthusiasm by the American left. But it did the governor no harm that his books, like some of his agency heads, were relatively exotic or of suspect pedigree for an American politician (and for his part, Brown himself was usually suitably vague about philosophical origins, leaving the footnotes to aides). This mattered less than the sheer style of the thing. "He was giving an elegant finger to the powers that be," recalled one aide of the early days, "and that was enough." Of course no concrete Coal Board socialism emerged from the chastened government in Sacramento, and the governor shot up in the polls.

The national press came to look. Charmed by the lean hubris of it all, the Krafts, Broders, Evanses and Novaks sooner or later trooped to Sacramento to explore the mystery, and obviously good copy, of who *is* Jerry Brown. Some journalists seemed to discover a churlishness and bravado about this fresh thoughtful leadership in California. Richard Reeves opened a late 1975 article in the *New York Times Magazine*, one of the first major profiles on Brown, with the following dialogue:

> *"I am going to starve the schools financially until I get some educational reforms," said the governor of California, Edmund G. Brown, Jr.*
> *"What reforms? What do you want?" asked Jack Rees, the executive director of the California Teachers Association.*
> *"I don't know yet."*

But clearly taken with the tone of the exchange, whatever its administrative or political sense, Reeves went on in the next line, and without much subsequent questioning, to echo the logic that still seems to make Brown "enough" for the press as well as for California voters: "Jerry Brown is different. He is the most interesting politician in the United States."

Of a score of articles about the California governor over the past three years, only a handful have gone beyond the entertainments of his lifestyle, unorthodox work or dietary habits, and the seemingly cryptic and/or erudite inspirations of his public service. First as a novel diversion from the corruption of Nixon and incompetence of Ford, then as a late 1976 challenger to



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Carter's nomination, now as a deliverance from a boring presidency, Brown has enjoyed broad and generally favorable personal publicity both in and out of California, with comparatively little critical examination of either his record or his life beyond the popular appearances.

For the few who cared to notice, there was some early evidence that Brown's regime would practice banal political vices along with its brash virtues. The same governor who deplored the inefficiency of the bureaucrats soon insisted on reviewing personally some of the most trivial state business, and delegated or pulled back authority by fits and starts, often grinding the upper levels of the executive to a halt. The reflective intellectual ignored new proposals and often addressed policy meetings with distractions and irrelevancies. The selfless ascetic, according to several sources, began to approach with worldly relish the flattering interviews by national columnists and the puncturing, increasingly applauded public questions and put-downs directed at his own departments and other state institutions.

Jerry Brown by Paul Szep

The most blatant of Brown's early embarrassments was the firing in mid-1975 of James Lorenz, the respected founder of California Rural Legal Assistance, who was appointed Brown's director of employment development with a charge to propose a jobs policy for the state's million unemployed. Lorenz promptly devised a moderate reformist pilot program of public service employment through private community groups, with provisions for future expansion, a state bank and development corporation, and tough disclosure regulations concerning the lending policies of insurance companies and banks. What followed on all sides was a sequence of missed signals, personality clashes and political bickering common to state government. When Lorenz's plan, still apparently unread by Brown, was leaked and played luridly in the conservative *Oakland Tribune*, the frightened governor swiftly dumped Lorenz and ostentatiously assembled an economic advisory committee from the leadership of California's corporate giants, including Bank of America, Pacific Telephone and Standard Oil. "*Sic transit* Schumacher and Buddha" as one disillusioned former official recalled the incident.

Largely ignored amid the general press euphoria of Brown's first months, the Lorenz firing was a revealing portent of the politics behind the image in Sacrameto. By late 1975, state government had begun to slip back into the worn contours of gubernatorial posturing and assembly inaction, with no obstreperous plans to disturb the surface. Critics complained that Brown's few efforts at bureaucratic reform seemed to do little more than turn over state problems to a similar organizational indifference or disarray in private industry. When elements of the Democratic old guard mounted a last stand against Jimmy Carter late in the spring of 1976, Brown's enormous California popularity and his national press appeal made him a natural choice. But despite his belated bloodying of Carter in the Maryland primary and elsewhere, which neither has forgotten, substantive doubts about Brown only grew in his brief presidential fling. In less forgiving campaign interviews, he rambled vaguely about urban problems or welfare reform. About other ostensibly central issues in the Democratic race—defense and foreign policy, Carter's promise of executive reorganization—Brown was even murkier. The Pentagon budget probably could not be cut all that much, he told the *New York Post* without elaboration, if the US was to "reassert itself as a world leader." Still, the electoral appeal was clearly there in the country as in



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California, the root political magnetism of good looks and youth and a stylish rhetoric of antipolitics, however shallow or unsubstantiated by the record in Sacramento.

Back in California since Carter's victory, the old austerity continues to exert its magic on the press and on Brown's popularity polls. This summer, when the governor picked up Prince Charles in the Plymouth and had His Highness to a brown bag lunch at the office, it was a major media event in California and a delight to Brown's political aides. Meanwhile, the impact of his administration remains mixed at best. In the state assembly he has spent his support, courage and skill on a range of progressive causes, from government-paid abortions to tax breaks for the elderly to health care reforms and a veto of capital punishment. Encrusted regulatory boards have been renewed with fresh appointments; volunteer public service and youth conservation programs have begun; and an office of Appropriate Technology has been created to research new, smaller-scale approaches to farming, recycling and energy production.

At the same time, Brown on balance seems to have moved steadily rightward. Reacting to corporate and union grumbling about the state's profit climate, he has become an unabashed booster of big investments. He supports business tax reductions in a state tax structure already notorious for its corporate loopholes at the expense of lower and middle-income individuals. The pro-business campaign climaxed in August with the Governor's proclaimed Space Day (cynical assistants call it "Spacey Day"), when he celebrated the first solo flight of the space shuttle at Edwards Air Force Base. Explained edgily by Brown as an "evolution" in his thinking—"Small is beautiful on earth but in space, big is better"—this new zealotry is an apt emblem of Jerry Brown's politics as governor. It is at once a showy pop rapture with the subject of the moment (with which he regales visitors much as he used to extoll the "era of limits") and a ready accommodation with the political-economic status quo—in this case the mortal grip of the aerospace industry on California's job market. But the irony of Space Day goes deeper than Brown's whim or the naked local politics. The space shuttle itself, as scientific testimony and years of Senate debate demonstrated, has been one of the most egregious examples of the fiscal waste and governmental inertia Jerry Brown was supposed to repudiate. Developed less for its largely redundant functions in space than for the organizational survival of NASA, the shuttle flew last summer as another Washington triumph of corporate-bureaucratic lobbying over sound science policy. Apparently there will be no rescue from this artifice and waste in Sacramento.

From the rest of his government, assembled with such fanfare and apparent iconoclasm, there has been scarcely a squeak against the Governor's protean passions. No policy debates rage at the cabinet table in Sacramento. Dissent, much as in Washington, centers on Brown's style more than substance. At that, it seems largely muted and confined to the middle levels. Reagan holdovers, it turns out, were never quite replaced in key economic posts. Other appointees in agriculture and consumer affairs have proved sympathetic to corporate concerns in both areas. Three years later, it is plain that Brown carefully recruited or kept on a senior officialdom he could politically eclipse and bureaucratically control almost without exception. Again as in Washington—where the Carter administration enlisted, albeit at comparably lower levels, former Nader's raiders and other critics—the effect has been to coopt and silence much of the progressive opposition which Democratic governments deserve no less than Republican. Sprinkled with former seminarians, a graduate in Buddhist studies, an erstwhile French actor and several Reagan-scarred public interest veterans along with the usual lawyers and businessmen, Brown's regime was the political soap opera story that plausibly asked the old question: whether unconventional, non-establishment figures suddenly come to power would dominate the system, or vice-versa. In Brown's case, at least, the answer is no.

Consistent with past coverage, the press continues to emphasize the exuberance rather than the expedience in Brown's performance. With only a few caustic asides about the politics, *Newsweek* featured Space Day as an example of the Governor's "lively go-with-the-flow intelligence." Even the critics, however, have been largely fixed on the readily visible edges of Brown's personality—his personal isolation, or vanity (cameras are to stay on his good, left side), or ugly moods, one of which *Newsday*'s Martin Schram described as "a mix of the impetuous and the petulant . . . a special kind of rudeness, the kind that is associated with a boy who has been spoiled rich and who has had everything his way." No doubt there are clues to Brown's character and politics in his origins as the only son of Pat Brown, the hale, now Trumanized California pol who rose through Democratic ranks to his own governorship, 1958-1966. Family lore, some of it revealing, has the boy resenting phony politics in the parlor, or the father ushering his slight, cerebral son to San Francisco's Olympic Club to learn to box in front of assorted local politicians and voters.

There is pertinent, unmined background too in Jerry Brown's education at a Catholic prep school and his three and a half years as a Jesuit novitiate, where he read theology, meditated, endured stern regimentation involving an early 30-day retreat, and picked, by his own account, a prodigious tonnage of Jesuit grapes. More than his subsequent year-and-a-half at Berkeley or an unremarkable glide through Yale Law, the Jesuit training one way or another clearly stamped him with the ascetic personal habits and intellectual curiosity he



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has worn so handsomely in office and in the polls.

More disturbing questions about Brown the Governor and would-be President, questions about the shallowness or depth of the man and his politics, arise from the generally ignored ten years between school and his election as governor. After Yale, there was a short Spanish course at Berkeley, brief work as a California Supreme Court clerk, a rambling trip through Latin America and, in 1966, a return to a job with the posh Los Angeles law firm of Tuttle and Taylor. In 1967 Brown joined the peace movement in the California Democratic Council. In 1968 he was a McCarthy campaign organizer in the state and an alternate delegate who walked out early at Chicago, calling the convention a "drag" when the peace resolution failed. In 1969 he joined what was by then a large group of respectable liberals marching with Cesar Chavez. Also in 1969, he ran successfully for the Los Angeles Community College Board, confiding to one of his father's old campaign managers, "I want to make a name for myself, so I want to run for something where I'll win and win big." A year later, Brown was elected as California's secretary of state. In that job he backed campaign spending reform, helped expose the tax fraud in Nixon's gift of vice presidential papers to the National Archives and orchestrated frequent and favorable press attention. There followed a 38 percent victory running alongside a campaign finance reform proposition in the gubernatorial primary, and then the cautious, almost-blown election to the statehouse.

During his swift rise, Brown touched all the ritual bases of California liberalism. In his vastly popular support of campaign contribution reform, he seemed to win newly fashionable enemies among big business and big labor. Almost from the beginning, though, there was about the ascent a sense of contrivance, of causes and ideas seized for the vogue or use of the moment and then put aside. Having exploited the open campaign issue as secretary of state, Brown in his own gubernatorial campaign compiled political blackmailing dossiers on opponents. Having walked beside Cesar Chavez and passed a farm worker's bill, Governor Brown and his administration soon became quietly cozy with the state's agribusiness combines. Whether the cause is political opportunism or some genuine inability to form a commitment, what stands out from the Brown record is its relative lack of seriousness amid all the pretense. The substantive comparisons with other flawed politicians, Gene McCarthy and even Hubert Humphrey, are not flattering in that respect. No steady stand, no abiding principle—McCarthy's antimilitarism or Humphrey's devotion to civil rights—emerges from Jerry Brown's decade in politics.

Missing too is even Jimmy Carter's brief live brush, as a naval officer, with the bureaucracies that are the heart of the problem in Sacramento as well as Washington. As Brown's governorship quickly revealed, his antipolitics were abstract, stylishly popular and perhaps personally gratifying, but ultimately barren regarding authentic change in government. Beyond the glibness and irreverance, genuine issues somehow never appear. Jerry "era of limits" Brown could ask what purpose state agencies served, but not what ethic or arrangements drove the corporate powers, unions or agricultural giants of the state. The later Space Day governor waxes eloquent on how satellites will bring the Harvard faculty to the school children of Watts, but says far less about how the same children live when the set is turned off. For that matter, several accounts of Brown—from former aides as well as journalists—record an almost Marie Antoinette-like indifference to the submerged issues of poverty and want. "There is no unemployment crisis," runs a typical quote. "When there are people rioting in the streets, then we will know that a problem exists."

But if the national economy sags, if Carter's approval rating seems low enough, Brown certainly will run. Most informed sources in and out of the camp believe he will follow the proven McCarthy path, starting early in primaries and caucuses, trying to ignite Vietnam-level excitement with some mix of the sick economy, Carter's ineptitude and of course his own youthful attractive presence. Brown is sure to be a more skillful campaigner than his often irascible image in 1974 or the hurried stand-in of 1976. He will be well supported, with considerable backing on the Western left as well as among the Democratic party regulars, whose inner politics and rites of deference he probably understands better than Carter even now. He will bring to the fight his region's old antagonism against the eastern establishment reigning anew under Carter, and the force of that asset is considerable. "We want a real partnership with the West," Vice President Mondale said recently on a swing through the area to smooth over widespread discontent on energy and other issues. "How about just diplomatic recognition," muttered a young local politician in the back of the room.

Brown's most powerful asset, however, will be the demonstrated appeal of his image. "Popular, "different," "interesting"—lit by the cliches of his press notices, he seems to ride better than any other politician the broader cultural wave of self-absorption that has been the vengeance of the 1970s. In what Tom Wolfe calls the "Me Decade," amid the craze for self-improvement and the strained search for celebrities, Brown's safe, sacrificial but winning novelty may be a priceless political holding, the quick-weight-loss, stop-worrying diet come to the White House. Self-absorption may not have been genuine intellect or even good administration in Sacramento, but it has been, and will be, good politics. It is all very California.

But what a melancholy contest to contemplate—against Carter in 1980 or Mondale in 1984, the Old Democracy challenged by the New, the familiar earnest Washington incompetence versus the fresh ascetic chic.



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# Arts and Lives

## Stanley Kauffmann on theater

### A Touch of the Poet (Helen Hayes)

When Eugene O'Neill was awarded the Nobel prize in 1936, congratulations poured in from around the world, "but," says Louis Sheaffer in his biography, "what particularly pleased O'Neill . . . was that the Irish ambassador in Washington praised him on behalf of the Irish Free State 'as adding . . . to the credit of old Ireland.'" Said O'Neill to a friend: "What could be more perfect?"

We forget, in our view of O'Neill as the best American dramatist, how Irish he thought himself and how important his Irishness was to his best work. In fact a rough rule of thumb could distinguish between his (many) lesser plays and his (few) towering ones by that very Irishness: it doesn't figure in the former and it does in the latter. (Even Hickey in *The Iceman Cometh*, though his origins are unspecified, always seems Irish-American.) Obviously O'Neill was American but not single-mindedly: it's the conflict of cultures, Irish-Catholic versus American Protestant or American godless, that lies at the very base of his great dramas.

This conflict ground to the forefront of his mind as his life went on. Between 1935 and 1941, when he was at his creative peak, he planned a cycle of seven long plays to be called *A Tale of Possessors Self-Dispossessed* and said that he was "going on the theory that the United States, instead of being the most successful country in the world, is the greatest failure. It's the greatest failure because it was given everything, more than any other country." At the core of that statement is the voice of the disappointed immigrant, the unrequited lover.

Only two plays of the cycle exist—O'Neill burned some manuscripts. *More Stately Mansions*, which was to be the second in the series, was not revised or polished: posthumously, it was adapted and produced and published. (I saw it, or some of it, in Germany with Elizabeth Bergner.) The first play is *A Touch of the Poet*.

The day is July 27, 1828, the place Melody's tavern, a few miles from Boston. Con Melody is Irish-born—high-born, he insists—a former major in Wellington's Spanish campaigns. Come to America with his wife and daughter, he lets them do the work in the place while he boozes with his cronies and lords it over them with his past grandeur. Today is the anniversary of the Battle of Talavera in which Con won glory, and on every anniversary he puts on his uniform.

Convalescing upstairs in the inn (we never see him) is a young "Yankee", Simon Harford, the poet of the title, who had been living a Walden-like existence nearby, fell ill, and is being nursed back to health by Con's daughter, Sara. The central action involves a possible marriage between the two and Con's terrible degradation when he attempts to avenge his and his daughter's honor for an insult from Simon's father. At the end Con, his uniform torn, his face bruised, his illusions broken, shoots the thoroughbred mare that was his token of gentility and goes to join his cronies in the bar. The gentleman in exile has been replaced by the commoner at home—in a new home.

One of the play's several interests is formal: to see how close it is in tone and in dramaturgy to the 19th-century popular theater and to see how this links O'Neill with other great writers. Ibsen's realistic period, beginning with *Pillars of Society*, shows the effects of the "well-made" plays with which he had dealt in his six years' practical work in the Bergen theater. Martin Meisel has written an excellent book on *Shaw and the Nineteenth-Century Theater*. The paradox of O'Neill is that, because he was sickened by his actor-father's career in such vehicles as *The Count of Monte Cristo*, he began his writing in the "new" realist-symbolist vein and yet in his maturity he came back in certain aspects to his father's theater. Talking about the role of Con Melody, he said: "What that one needs is an actor like Maurice Barrymore [John's father] or James O'Neill, my old man. One of those big-chested, chiseled-mug, romantic old boys. . . . Most actors in these times lack an air." And because he could not find such an actor, he would not let the play be performed in his lifetime.

The link with the theater's past is not only in such conventions as the innocent lower-class maiden and the visiting upper-class poet: in the protagonist who is both dashing and devilish, like Robert Macaire: in the construction with its on-stage action that is often almost naively designed to cover lapses of time while things happen off-stage. It's in O'Neill's reliance on the actor of Melody, as the quotation above proves, to *complete* the play in a way that his other good plays do not so absolutely require. *A Touch of the Poet* is not on the scale of *Long Day's Journey into Night*, but it does have tragic dimension—the fracture of European romance on American reality—if it has the right actor to give us both sides of the catastrophe.

In the last twenty minutes or so of the play, Jason Robards is fine as Melody, on the other side of the catastrophe in which Con is degraded. When the role comes *to* Robards, when he can once again do the one character he can do well—the ironic, self-loathing drunk, the Jamie of *Long Day's Journey* and *A Moon for the Misbegotten*—he fulfills it. But in the major part of the role (pun intended), he is, frankly, appalling.

I could hardly believe what I was seeing and hearing. Instead of a Byron-quoting ex-officer, a fallen emperor with a ragged retinue, we get mugging

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**SK**



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and caricature. For just one instance: when the elegant Mrs. Harford, Simon's mother, enters unannounced, Robards turns from his mirror and discovers her. Then he does a full unabashed "take" from her face to the audience, like a baggy-pants comic when a pretty girl comes in. Throughout, until the very end, he kept reminding me of Harvey Korman of "The Carol Burnett Show" playing a lord. Then I realized what was happening. Robards (and his director) took the "elevated" portion of the role as impersonation, a kind of W.C. Fields act of grandeur. Nothing could be falser or more destructive of the play. Either the grand Con is *not* "acting" or there is no tragedy. The two actors I've seen previously in the part, Eric Portman and Denholm Elliott, had their shortcomings, but both of them understood that basic truth. Without it, without Con's belief in himself as a gentleman, all we get is the exposure of a self-conscious faker, which is trivial.

Kathryn Walker, who plays Sara, is a beautiful and greatly gifted actress, but if you remember her as the team owner in the film *Slapshot*, you will understand that she is too mature for the part. That lovely contralto of hers is not the voice in which to rhapsodize about a first kiss. Milo O'Shea, as a former fellow-campaigner of Con's, is pedestrian as ever; he is evidently making a career of being an Irish actor in America. Betty Miller gives an adequate but trite genteel performance as Simon's mother. The treasure of the evening is Geraldine Fitzgerald as Nora, Con's patient, devoted wife. Beginning with her Mary in *Long Day's Journey* in 1971, Fitzgerald has shown how an actress of middle years can grow. Her Nora is rich, peasant-wise, enduring and endearing.

This is Ben Edwards's second design for the play: he did the setting for the first New York production in 1958 which I saw. Refreshing myself from a drawing, I prefer that early setting. Most of the entrances are now squinched on one side, and Edwards has built a staircase so steep and ill-placed that it gives us the most ungainly view possible of descending actors.

I've seen most of José Quintero's direction of O'Neill plays since *The Iceman Cometh* in 1956, and I think he has declined badly. His *Anna Christie* last year was clumsy: this production is even clumsier. In addition to the character-misinterpretation and the faulty acting he permits, his use of the stage is either cluttered or frenetic—from the stagy opening scene between O'Shea and the barkeep, uneasy and phonily played, to the last act when Quintero has the barefoot Walker race back and forth across the stage like a Paul Taylor dancer.

And Quintero has nibbled at the text. Indeed, the very last line is missing.

# The Poetry of J. V. Cunningham

If there were only one diamond in the whole world, some people might worship it, while others might consider it merely an interesting curiosity. While some people would cross oceans in order to admire it, many might never have occasion even to hear of it. Experts would be fascinated, and perhaps a little nonplussed. Value, as the people at de Beers, Ltd., comprehend so precisely, is a funny thing.

As this awkward little parable suggests, I admire J. V. Cunningham's poems and epigrams quite a lot. I think that if there were more than one of him—or even if he had successful imitators—his work might be as popular as engagement rings. But he is unique; in many ways his poems have nothing at all to do with modern poetry. And so, honored though he is (most recently by the $10,000 prize awarded by the Academy of American Poets), I don't believe that nearly as many people read his poems as would get deep pleasure from them.

The lapidary comparison is suggested by the poems themselves: brilliant, portably brief, with a dazzling formal precision and an unmistakable depth of fire. And in the epigrams of social and moral observation, there is the obdurate, cutting point:

*This Humanist whom no beliefs constrained*
*Grew so broad-minded he was scatter-brained.*

*(Epigram 43)*


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*You ask me how Contempt who claims to sleep*
*With every woman that has ever been*
*Can still maintain that women are skin deep?*
*They never let him any deeper in.*

*(Epigram 62)*

Because they are funny, immediately accessible, and patently masterful in execution, the epigrams that fall into this category—incisive, witty, judicatory—seem effective ways to introduce people who are not yet Cunningham-addicts to his work. I have often quoted them to friends for that purpose; but having done that, one worries that the new reader, whether through wavering attention or prejudice, may think that Cunningham is merely a funny man, the author of a kind of light verse.

So—oversolicitously, perhaps—I feel like pointing out that "This Humanist" isolates a serious, irritating moral failure, and that by cracking the whip of two lines and a rhyme the poem manages to isolate that moral failure while making neither too much nor too little of it. I feel tempted to talk about the poem a lot, about its technique, for example: "broad-minded" and "scatter-brained" mean the same thing spatially, so that the second phrase explodes the first one as if from within; "constrained" in its Latin root presents still another version of the same spatial figure; because the rhyme neatly clicks the colloquial, Germanic "scatter-brained" onto the more elevated, Norman/Latinate "constrained," the action of deflation is made more crisp; the focussing "Humanist" defines precisely the right terrain for the observation about facile, bland tolerance; the movement of both pentameter lines is deft and light, not a simple swat on alternate syllables, yet the iambic pulse is utterly firm and lucid . . . and so forth. At the least, such critical analysis dramatizes the poem's brevity, a quality which Cunningham makes into a remarkably effective resource.

In fact, "light verse" is a matter of definition, and if some of the epigrams are so slight as to be negligible, many of them are "light" on a very high level of mastery indeed:

*Here lies New Critic who would fox us*
*With his poetic paradoxes.*
*Though he lies here rigid and quiet,*
*If he could speak he would deny it.*

*(Epigram 60)*

*Genius is born and made. This heel who*
*mastered*
*By infinite pains his trade was born a bastard.*

*(Epigram 27)*

These small, lightning-fast operations are made possible by a special poise, stylistic and personal. The sources of that poise are partly historical: the epigrams of Donne, Jonson, Martial, the European tradition of epigrams, Latin and Vulgate. (Similarly, "The Helmsman: An Ode" echoes both Horace and Vergil, and closely resembles a great Horatian ode in reticence, allusiveness, and power.) In a profound sense, however, the poise is Cunningham's own accomplishment, and not historical. It is an invention which makes his work possible, his creation of the striking, anomalous person who appears, or declines to appear, in the poems. From that imposing person's odd, self-developed moral terrain, the poems can make their quick raids on experience, and on our received ideas about what poetry is. Though the poems are dubious about human character, their force and coherence are based upon a particular, consistent personality.

Aloof, melancholy, passionate about the certitude of definitions, drily resigned to sexual restlessness, urbane, scholarly, worldly, that personality is above all solitary. It is not you or me, and it is not Everyman. This gloomy, fiercely-reasoned and rather devil-ridden rebelliousness toward most of the world seems to have to do with being an Irish ex-Catholic. It is a pessimistic declaration of the individual's separateness from the comfort of received ideas, and from the contemptible toys of the senses. The laconic, ruthless style gives this sour isolation its dignity and a kind of glamour, almost heroic, almost "romantic"—and perhaps even a little melodramatic:

*Dark thoughts are my companions. I have*
*wined*
*With lewdness and with crudeness, and I find*
*Love is my enemy, dispassionate hate*
*Is my redemption though it come too late,*
*Though I come to it with a broken head*
*In the cat-house of the dishevelled dead.*

*(Epigram 28)*

This untamed, somewhat self-regarding anger frequently asserts the individual will by setting it apart from some loose, attractive idea. For instance, the idea of pastoral:

*I am no shepherd of a child's surmises.*
*I have seen fear where the coiled serpent rises,*

*Thirst where the grasses burn in early May*
*And thistle, mustard and the wild oat stay.*

*There is dust in this air. I saw in the heat*
*Grasshoppers busy in the threshing wheat.*

*So to this hour. Through the warm dusk I*
*drove*
*To blizzards sifting on the hissing stove,*

*And found no images of pastoral will,*
*But fear, thirst, hunger, and this huddled*
*chill.*

*("Montana Pastoral")*

The "I" who sees, drives, and finds is still more distinct from the landscape than the landscape itself is from convention. The separateness and detachment of the shepherd is the point.

Similarly, the warm and sweeping idea of Neoplatonic love is used negatively, as a blank backdrop for the dark figure who contradicts it:

*The dry soul rages. The unfeeling feel*
*With the dry vehemence of the unreal.*
*So I in the Idea of your arms, unwon,*
*Am as the real in the unreal undone.*

*(Epigram 16)*

The lover does not feel more than a "dry" passion because he does not feel the arms of the lady, who is "unfeeling" in another sense. The Platonic Idea of her unfelt embrace, in which he loses himself, is an illusion; it is unreal, a chimera which undoes or negates the will or reality of the lover. The sophisticated repetitions, the insistent negative prefix, the Scholastic precision of terms, are all as resistant, as non-Modernist, and as fierce as the conception itself. Though the poet may cleave to the Idea, he knows that it is not true:

*Dear, if unsocial privacies obsess me,*
*If to my exaltations I be true,*
*If memories and images possess me,*
*Yes, if I love you, what is that to you?*
*My folly is no passion for collusion.*
*I cherish my illusions as illusion.*

*(Epigram 37)*

Again in this peculiar love poem (the love is treated as hardly the loved one's business), the poet's consciousness defines itself by refusal and denial. Oddly enough, Cunningham is in his strange way a profound love poet, a topic to which I will return in a moment.

Finally, the very premises of human motivation itself are coldly doubted, and partly excluded:

*How we desire desire! Joy of surcease*
*In joy's fulfillment is bewildered peace,*
*And harsh renewal. Life in fear of death*
*Will trivialize the void with hurrying breath,*



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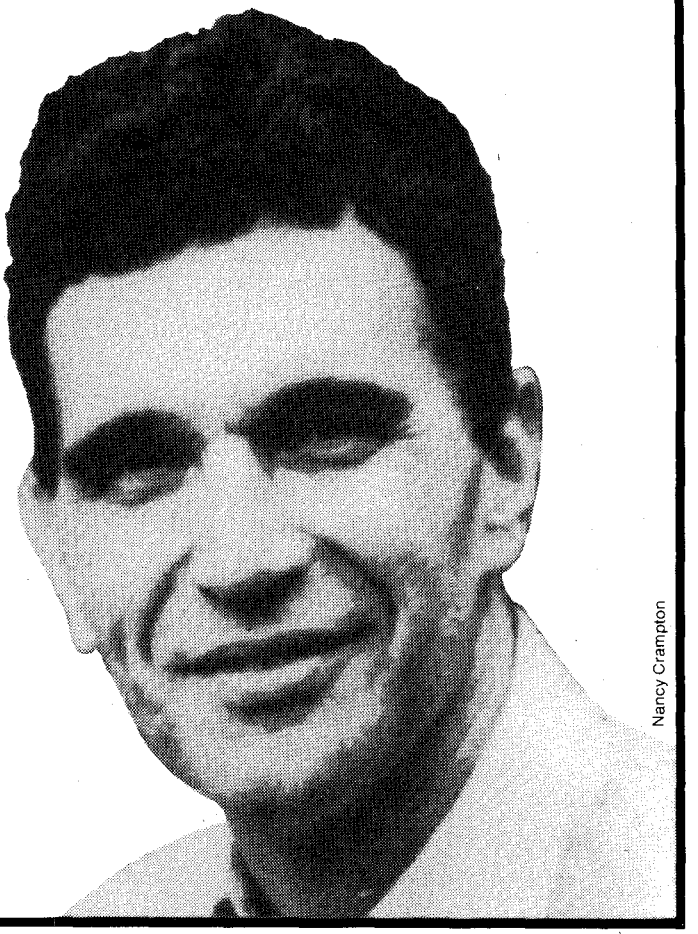

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*With harsh indrawal. Nor love nor lust impels us.*
*Time's hunger to be realized compels us.*
*(Epigram 36)*

What motivates the spirit is its crude lust simply to become specified, to be, to visit the particulars of life like a spoiled priest in the fleshpots. If the pastoral, the amatory, the desirous, are arbitrary shams which would violate the purity of isolation, then in lines like those above, the isolation itself is included among such arbitrary figments. It is another particular desire. It seems relevant that in his essay on Emily Dickinson Cunningham quotes with admiration Dickinson's

*It might be lonelier*
*Without the loneliness.*

The idea of a willed, rebellious seclusion, the consciousness of being alone, can be a kind of consoling companion.

So far I have concentrated on Cunningham's most epigrammatic and reductive manner, in order to suggest the moral presence—the impersonal personality—which underlies those reductions and exclusions. I have tried to fill in the outline of phrases which occur to one, like "passionately cold."

Now I would like to look at some less reductive, more lyrical poems. These are concerned with the largest exclusion, the most fundamental action of angry self-definition, in Cunningham's work. They are concerned with the exclusion of the Absolute, or more precisely, the idea of an Absolute. The poet's definition of himself as distinct from that idea is partly stoical and partly angry and restless. The anger and restlessness have to do with the fact that his chosen patterns of thought and feeling, including his abstract, Scholastic style, are indebted to that primary Abstraction. The old form persists, nourishes, threatens. The early, wonderful, somewhat uncharacteristic poem "The Phoenix" deals with this problem. It ends with a superb long sentence, addressed to that "Mythical bird that bears in burying":

*I have not found you in exhausted breath,*
*That carves its image on the Northern air,*
*I have not found you on the glass of death*
*Though I am told that I shall find you there,*
*Imperturbable in the final cold,*

*There where the North wind shapes white cenotaphs,*
*There where snowdrifts cover the fathers'*
*mound,*
*Unmarked but for these wintry epitaphs,*
*Still are you singing there without sound,*
*Your mute voice on the crystal embers flinging.*

The absence of God is a powerful presence; the muteness a significant voice. More downright and explicit is "Timor Dei," a kind of negative prayer, in the slow, emphatic trimeter of Nashe and Ralegh. The subject is a specific emotion, the Fear of God; the poet does not feel that emotion, but he has known it and can fear its power and its possible return. The reasons for having rejected the absolute have to do with clarity and independence of vision; "Dear" turns out to mean "costly, expensive":

*Timor Dei*

*Most beautiful, most dear,*
*When I would use Thy light,*
*Beloved, omniscient Seer,*
*Thou didst abuse my sight;*

*Thou didst pervade my being*
*Like marsh air steeped in brine;*
*Thou didst invade my seeing*
*Till all I saw was Thine.*

*Today, from my own fence*
*I saw the grass fires rise,*
*And saw Thine old incense*
*Borne up in frosty sighs.*

*Most terrible, most rude,*
*I will not shed a tear*
*For lost beatitude,*
*But I still fear thy fear.*

"Rude" here is not only "obtrusive," but also vague, primitive or rough in outline. The omnipresent has no perceptible definition. It is cold, shapeless, infertile and perhaps lethal, but above all it is miasmal, hard to see or to see through. It is also attractive—beautiful and terrible—because of the images of mortality: they dramatize the attraction as they all, breath, fire, incense, are borne upward as they consume their substance. From his own fence, he fears that possible and fear-inspired awe.

I have taken these poems to embody, if not the cause, then the type, of Cunningham's passionate negations—those refusals which are far less cold and dry than, in prose and verse, he says they are.

Cunningham is a love poet. But that is largely a misleading statement. Here is some of his prose on the subject, from *The Journal of John Cardan:*

*The current attitude toward love usually ignores the element of want or need, for it spreads from the protected children of the middle class who have never seen want face to face and whose needs wander among the luxuries, since they are provided with the necessities, of life. But need is more important than sentiment, for it simply is while the latter comes and goes and enjoys its own ambiguities. Hence another's need lays obligations upon us which we cannot reject without moral damage to ourselves, while another's sentiment is merely an invitation to share in the exploitation of his leisure.*

(I suppose that some readers are offended by this kind of thing; I suppose that imagining them being offended by it is part of the fun of it.)

Need gives the bite and heat to the two epigrams I have quoted ("The dry soul rages. The unfeeling feel" and "Dear, if unsocial privacies obsess me"). Love, the need for another or the need to choose another, from beyond the fence of stoical self-definition, is an important subject for Cunningham. It is the converse preoccupation to the passionate independence I have been describing. Cunningham's poems frequently imply "This poem is by me, not you, and I am different from you: cold and edged where you are warm and tolerant, fiery and possessed where you are indifferent or bemused." It is misleading to call him a love poet, though he returns to the subject often, because his love poems are as obdurate as his others. They too flaunt a tight-lipped, stoical outlook; the poem called "Choices," for example, treats love's constancy as a kind of philosophical concession, even a grudging one:

*Allegiance is assigned*
*Forever when the mind*
*Chooses and stamps the will.*
*Thus, I must love you still*
*Through good and ill.*

However, "We may retract the heart," a tactic which leads to the somewhat sour peace of the last stanza:

*So manners will repair*
*The ravage of despair*
*Which generous love invites,*
*Preferring quiet nights*
*To vain delights.*

This is both bracingly sure of itself, and appalling. I remember a letter from a friend and fellow-poet, also an admirer of Cunningham, in which my friend hoped that in his own poems the attitude toward life rested on some goal more generous than—paraphrasing another



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Cunningham poem—"Sleeping Well." One admires the way the resignation is tuned just beyond smugness, though one wouldn't want to emulate it.

A warmer, more sustained work on need and love is Cunningham's remarkable sequence "To What Strangers, What Welcome," first published in an extremely attractive pamphlet by Alan Swallow in 1964. I'd like to conclude this essay by quoting from that work, and saying a little about it.

"I drive Westward," the first poem of the sequence begins, and a woman comes into the driver's revery as he crosses the desert—"in the vacancies of need,/The leisure of desire, whirlwinds a face/As luminous as love, lost as this place." The action of the sequence, in summary, is the drive to the Pacific, a love affair, and the return Eastward alone, to the epilogue of loss and reflection.

There are incidents (a pick-up, a strip-show in Las Vegas), and there are pertinent questions, as in the opening of the third poem:

*In a few days now when two memories meet*
*In that place of disease, waste, and desire*
*Where forms receptive, featureless and vast*
*Find occupation, in that narrow dark,*
*That warm sweat of a carnal tenderness,*
*What figure in the pantheon of lust,*
*What demon is our god?*

Though the answer is "mostly pride," there is something like an idyl, in the eighth poem:

*The night is still. The unfailing surf*
*In passion and subsidence moves*
*As at a distance. The glass walls,*
*And redwood, are my utmost being.*
*And is there there in the last shadow,*
*There in the final privacies*
*Of unaccosted grace,—is there,*
*Gracing the tedium to death,*
*An intimation? Something much*
*Like love, like loneliness adrowse*
*In states more primitive than peace,*
*In the warm wonder of winter sun.*

The syllabic measure, which Cunningham usually associates with a flat, casual tone, here has a quality of dreamy release. The tenth poem opens in the same measure, and a similar mellowness:

*A half hour for coffee, and at night*
*An hour or so of unspoken speech,*
*Hemming a summer dress as the tide*
*Turns at the right time.*

But this poem ends with a cooler reflection on the love-making. It is:

*Something*
*That happens because it must happen.*
*We live in the given. Consequence,*
*And lack of consequence, both fail us.*
*Good is what we can do with evil.*

And the next poem begins, "I drive Eastward." Though there is a plot, this is not narrative, but a sequence of reflections on the plot as outline of a distinct, emotional experience. (Cunningham has mentioned "Maud" as an example—though no exemplar—of the form.) The motive for the return from California to New England is not specified, as it would be in a narrative. But the familiar spirit or guiding presence of the return drive is specified, in an adaptation of Greville's great line "Absence my presence is, strangeness my grace." That familiar spirit is absence:

*Absence, my angel, presence at my side,*
*I know you as an article of faith*
*By desert, prairie, and this stonewalled road—*
*As much my own as is the thought of death.*

These lines compress the habitual solace of negation, the lifelong reality of need, as they compress the cross-continental drive. The absence of the particular woman has become part of the familiar spirit of the poet's "privacies"—to use one of his favorite words.

Of the poems that make up a closing epilogue, 14, the next-to-last, is perhaps the most naturalistic, and natural, of the entire sequence:

*I write only to say this,*
*In a syllabic dryness*
*As inglorious as I feel:*
*Sometime before drinking time*
*For the first time in some weeks*
*I heard of you, the casual*
*News of a new life, silence*
*Of unconfronted feeling*
*And maples in the slant sun*
*The gay colour of decay.*
*Was it unforgivable,*
*My darling, that you loved me?*

This immediacy, startling in context, stands in relation to "To What Strangers, What Welcome" somewhat as the sequence stands in relation to Cunningham's work: each embodies a more frank yearning of the individual self, across the continent or across the gap of a previously defended separateness.

But on the other hand, the fifteenth and final poem seems to define that separateness in more characteristic, and conclusive, terms; the self is separate, even, from the idea of its own identity—and yet that ultimate refusal also feels like a reconciliation:

*Identity, that spectator*
*Of what he calls himself, that net*
*And aggregate of energies*
*In transient combination—some*
*So marginal are they mine? Or is*
*There mine? I sit in the last warmth*
*Of a New England fall, and I?*
*A premise of identity*
*Where the lost hurries to be lost,*
*Both in its own best interests*
*And in the interests of life.*

If this is a reconciliation, it is between a fierce setting-apart of identity and a sense of identity as a "premise" within a world of huge, fluent energies; it is between loss and survival, the interests of survival and those of integrity. To survive, the self becomes a little other than it was, becomes its fresh increments of memory; to retain its integrity, the self gives up some of the past.

This sense of a flowing, partial, almost arbitrary relationship between the individual and the world is somewhat different from the harsher, reductive energy of the epigrams. This elusive, affecting kind of material could be dealt with only by a poet whose vocabulary is philosophical, while his obsessions are love and isolation. The terrain is unique, and so is the nature of the talent. That is why they are so striking in combination, and so valuable.

**Robert Pinsky**

*Robert Pinsky*, poet and author of *The Situation of Poetry* (Princeton) teaches at Wellesley.

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# The Poems of J.V. Cunningham

This is our eleventh in a series of presentations of poets and essays on their work. Principal books of poems by J. V. Cunningham are: *The Helmsman,* The Colt Press (1942); *The Judge Is Fury,* The Swallow Press (1947); *The Exclusions of a Rhyme,* Swallow (1960); *To What Strangers, What Welcome,* Swallow (1964); and *The Collected Poems and Epigrams of J. V. Cunningham,* The Swallow Press (©1971 by J. V. Cunningham), from which we have made our selection.

## The Aged Lover Discourses in the Flat Style

There are, perhaps, whom passion gives a grace,
Who fuse and part as dancers on the stage,
But that is not for me, not at my age,
Not with my bony shoulders and fat face.
Yet in my clumsiness I found a place
And use for passion: with it I ignore
My gaucheries and yours, and feel no more
The awkwardness of the absurd embrace.

It is a pact men make, and seal in flesh,
To be so busy with their own desires
Their loves may be as busy with their own,
And not in union. Though the two enmesh
Like gears in motion, each with each conspires
To be at once together and alone.

## August Hail

In late summer the wild geese
In the white draws are flying.
The grain beards in the blue peace.
The weeds are drying.

The hushed sky breeds hail.
Who shall revenge unreason?
Wheat headless in the white flail
Denies the season.

## To the Reader

Time will assuage.
Time's verses bury
Margin and page
In commentary,

For gloss demands
A gloss annexed
Till busy hands
Blot out the text,

And all's coherent.
Search in this gloss
No text inherent:
The text was loss.

The gain is gloss.

## The Metaphysical Amorist

You are the problem I propose,
My dear, the text my musings glose:
I call you for convenience love.
By definition you're a cause
Inferred by necessary laws—
You are so to the saints above.
But in this shadowy lower life
I sleep with a terrestrial wife
And earthy children I beget.
Love is a fiction I must use,
A privilege I can abuse,
And sometimes something I forget.

Now, in the heavenly other place
Love is in the eternal mind
The luminous form whose shade she is,
A ghost discarnate, thought defined.
She was so to my early bliss,
She is so while I comprehend
The forms my senses apprehend,
And in the end she will be so.

Her whom my hands embrace I kiss,
Her whom my mind infers I know.
The one exists in time and space
And as she was she will not be;
The other is in her own grace
And is *She is* eternally.

## Lector Aere Perennior

Poets survive in fame.
But how can substance trade
The body for a name
Wherewith no soul's arrayed?

No form inspires the clay
Now breathless of what was
Save the imputed sway
Of some Pythagoras,

Some man so deftly mad
His metamorphosed shade,
Leaving the flesh it had,
Breathes on the words they made.



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J.V. Cunningham
by Andras Goldinger

## For My Contemporaries

How time reverses
The proud in heart!
I now make verses
Who aimed at art.

But I sleep well.
Ambitious boys
Whose big lines swell
With spiritual noise,

Despise me not,
And be not queasy
To praise somewhat:
Verse is not easy.

But rage who will.
Time that procured me
Good sense and skill
Of madness cured me.

## The Phoenix

More than the ash stays you from nothingness!
Nor here nor there is a consuming pyre!
Your essence is in infinite regress
That burns with varying consistent fire,
Mythical bird that bears in burying!

I have not found you in exhausted breath
That carves its image on the Northern air,
I have not found you on the glass of death
Though I am told that I shall find you there,
Imperturbable in the final cold,

There where the North wind shapes white cenotaphs,
There where snowdrifts cover the fathers' mound,
Unmarked but for these wintry epitaphs,
Still are you singing there without sound,
Your mute voice on the crystal embers flinging.

## Monday Morning

The flattery has been infrequent
And somewhat grudging. There is junk mail
And no letter. The weather cloudy
With more snow. Fortuitous meeting,
The rustle of flirtation, the look—
Self-esteem sustained by any excuse,
By any misconstruction? No. No.
It is now a January world,
An after Christmas waiting. For what?
Not for this snow, this silence. There is
No resonance in the universe.
I must buy something extra today
And clutter up my house and my life.

## The Helmsman: An Ode

The voyage of the soul is simply
  Through age to wisdom;
    But wisdom, if it comes,
Comes like the ripening gleam of wheat,

Nourished by comfort, care, rain, sunlight,
  And briefly shining
    On windy and hot days,
Flashing like snakes underneath the haze.

But this, a memory of childhood,
  Of loves forgotten,
    And they who gave are still,
Gone now, irrevocable, undone.

O Penury, steadied to your will,
  I tread my own path,
    Though Self-Respect, discreet,
Plucks at my arm as I pass down street,

Querulous and pert. They tell in story
  That for proud Ajax,
    Vaingloriously self-slain,
Teucer set forth from his friends and kin;

He on the western shore of parting
  Paused to address them:
    'Comrades who have with me
Countless misfortunes endured, O Mine!

Brave friends, banish tonight dark sorrow;
  Set the white tables
    With garlands, lamps, with wine;
Drink and, tomorrow, untravelled seas!'

So sailed guileful Odysseus, so sailed
  Pious Aeneas,
    And cloudless skies brought sleep,
Stilling th' unmasterable, surging deep,

The helmsman stilled, his sea-craft guiding.
  O too confiding
    In star and wind and wave,
Naked you lie in an unknown grave.



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# Books Considered

## Gaudete
## by Ted Hughes
(Harper & Row; $10)

In the past eighteen months or so we have had several long poems that, while varying considerably in quality, are nevertheless ambitious, boldly and perhaps even quixotically ambitious—the ingenious *Book of Ephraim,* which takes up 90 pages of James Merrill's *Divine Comedies;* John Hollander's playful allegory *Reflections on Espionage: The Question of Cupcake;* James Dickey's flamboyant hymn to whiskey, *The Zodiac;* and, very recently, W. D. Snodgrass's *The Fuhrer Bunker: A Cycle of Poems in Progress.* To say that each of these books of poetry is unlike the other is an understatement: they have in common only an astonishing confidence in the ability of the poet to transpose refractory matter into an art of words, an art *through* words, that will not tire or turn self-conscious over a prolonged space. Every narrative poem, it might be hypothesized, is riskily experimental; failure is almost always foreordained, so that the poet is freed, curiously, to try for the most ambitious, it may even be the most outrageous, *tour de force.* Anyone who has read the above-mentioned poems will be surprised, I hope, to be told that Ted Hughes's *Gaudete* is by far the most outrageous of the lot.

After *Crow* of 1970, after the stark pitiless unspeakable 'king of carrion' whose songs had the jarring, frightful rhythms of bedtime stories (powerfully illustrated by Leonard Baskin)—after the revelation that "God spoke Crow" and that we know the answers to certain questions beforehand—

*Who owns these scrawny little feet?* Death.
*Who owns this bristly scorched-looking face?* Death.
*Who owns these still-working lungs?* Death.
*Who owns this utility coat of muscles?* Death.
*Who owns these unspeakable guts?* Death.
*Who owns these questionable brains?* Death.

(from "Examination at the Womb-door")

it was generally wondered what Hughes might do next; how, given the ostensible bleakness of his vision, and an evident impatience with the niceties of the well-wrought unspoken poem, he might continue to write poetry at all. (Yet critics who fasten on Hughes's better-known work, and ignore the books he has done for children, and the beautiful *Spring Summer Autumn Fall,* published in a limited edition by Rainbow Press of England, and the expanded *Seasons Songs* of 1975, are perhaps misled. There is far more to Hughes than the penurious

Ted Hughes by Andras Goldinger

Schopenhaurian nihilism that is the poetry's manifest concern.)

Now *Gaudete.* Two hundred pages long, prefaced with quotations from Heraclitus ("If it were not Hades, the god of the dead and the underworld, for whom these obscene songs are sung and festivals are made, it would be a shocking thing, but Hades and Dionysos are one") and *Parzival,* and an Argument without which the narrative would be a tantalizing obfuscation, and which really must be quoted in its entirety:

*An Anglican clergyman, the Reverend Nicholas Lumb, is carried away into the other world by elemental spirits. Just as in the Folktale, these spirits want him for some work in their world.*

*To fill his place in this world, for the time of his absence, the spirits make an exact duplicate of him out of an oak log, and fill it with elemental spirit life. This new Nicholas Lumb is to all appearances exactly the same as the old, has the same knowledge and mannerisms, but he is a log. A changeling.*

*This changeling proceeds to interpret the job of ministering the Gospel of love in his own log-like way.*

*He organizes the women of his parish into a coven, a love-society. And the purpose of the society is, evidently, the birth of a Messiah to be fathered by Lumb.*

*While he applies himself to this he begins to feel a nostalgia for independent, ordinary human life, free of his peculiar destiny.*

*At this point, the spirits who created him decide to cancel him. It may be that the original Lumb has done the work they wanted him to do, and so the changeling's time is up. The result is that all the husbands of the parish become aware of what is happening to their wives.*

*The narrative recounts the last day of the Changeling's life.*

*At the death of the changeling, the original Nicholas Lumb reappears in the world, in the West of Ireland, where he roams about composing hymns and psalms to a nameless female deity.*

Surreal, baffling, at times maddening, and by no means as lucid in its development as the Argument suggests, *Gaudete* is the record of a dream-journey that ritualistically subjects its protagonist (the 'log' Lumb) to violence, ends with his pursuit by enraged husbands, his death by way of a Mannlicher .318 that shatters his skull, and his destruction on a make-shift altar (with two of the women who loved him, unwisely, on either side of him) that is soaked with gasoline and set alight. In the Epilogue the original Nicholas Lumb appears, sitting on a rock by the sea. He has the power to call up a beast from the deep (or is it a spirit-double?), and he has written some twenty-five pages of poetry, fragments of a "world where all is temporary/ And must pass for its opposite." *Gaudete,* impassioned by drama for most of its dense, difficult pages, ends with strangely limpid, bodiless lyricism which does not always seem to be directed to a "nameless female deity" but which sets forth oxymoronic speculations in the simplest of language—

*Every day the world gets simply*
*Bigger and bigger*
*And smaller and smaller*

*Every day the world gets more*
*And more beautiful*



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*And uglier and uglier.*

*Your comings get closer.*
*Your goings get worse.*

Folktales, legends, ballads, myths of 'how things are' always carry with them an enviable sense of destiny: one never inquires about the likelihood of what transpires; one never thinks to ask who is speaking, and out of what context does he speak: causality is suspended, logic does not exist, like children of old we are meant to be absolutely silent, unquestioning. Outlandish, bizarre events roll over us; dream-figures cavort; there are ludicrous sequences, there are repetitions of the sort no self-conscious craftsman would tolerate; a gesture toward moralizing, sometimes, toward 'abstraction'; and that is all. Walpurgis Night, unlike ordinary nights, *does* come to an end, and cannot be repeated. So *Gaudete* unrolls, cramming an extraordinary amount of action and reflection into a single day, evoking for us numerous characters who, though not developed in any detail, nevertheless have important roles to play in the unfolding of the complex plot—the hapless, rather silly women who make up Reverend Lumb's 'coven', which is called the Women's Institute; the doomed Felicity, who will be Lumb's bride in death; the perplexed and finally murderous cuckolded husbands—Major Hagen, Dr. Westlake, Dunworth, Walsall, Evans; Commander Estridge, whose elder daughter Janet hangs herself because, made pregnant by Lumb, she despairs of his not loving her; a petty poacher named Garten; the mad, mute housekeeper Maud who, jealous of Lumb's involvement with the pretty young Felicity, murders her at the climax of a Dionysian orgy in the basement of the church. There are other characters, and grotesque incidental sequences that are presented like self-contained stories (in the most powerful, an otter-like thing emerges from the river while Lumb is fishing, and wrestles with Lumb, and evidently *is* Lumb; in another, Lumb discovers the men and women of his parish caught in a bog, the women buried alive to the neck in liquid mud, about a crater in which a baboon woman lies whom Lumb must rescue and presumably overcome—

*The rain striking across the mud face*
*washes it.*
*It is a woman's face,*
*A face as if sewn together from several faces.*
*A baboon beauty face,*
*A crudely stitched patchwork of faces,*
*But the eyes slide,*
*Alive and electrical, like liquid liquorice*
*behind the stitched lids . .*
. . . . . .
*Her embrace tightens stronger*
*As if a powerful spring trap bit into*
*his resistance.*
*He braces to free himself.*
*Her stitch-face grins into his face and*
*his spin cracks.*
*Suddenly he is afraid*

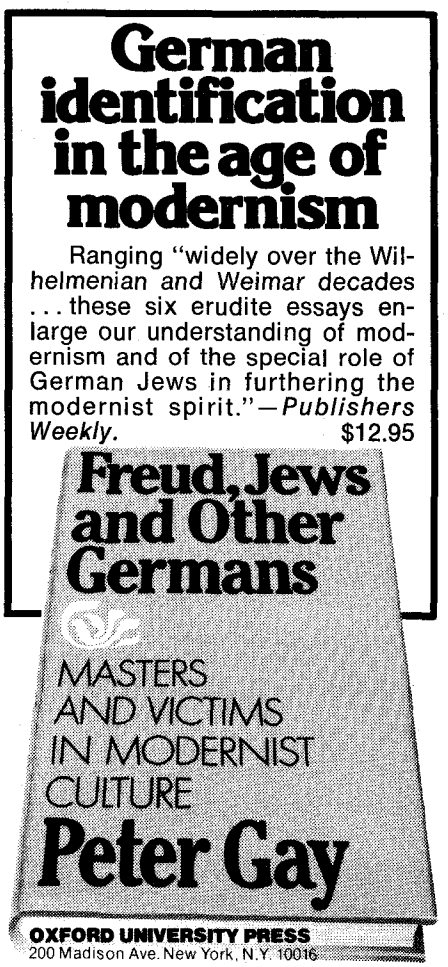
—though the relationship between the episode and Lumb's more general defeat is unclear.) And there are odd, obviously deliberate comic touches, when in the midst of all these extraordinary goings-on someone is calmly watching television, and nearly everyone drives cars—a white Ford Cortina, a blue Austin, a grey Daimler, a landrover.

If there is no single episode that possesses the uncanny power and worth of shorter Hughes pieces, like "Snow" and "Sunday," and most of the poems of *Lupercal* and *Wodwo*, the problem is perhaps simply that of structure. Narrative yearns to accelerate; it devours time, and insists that we face forward, that we keep in motion; it utilizes characters but is not concerned primarily with revealing them. Poetry, as it is written today, tends to be reflective; speculative; obsessed with detail, with fineness of perception, with the stopping of the clock. The two impulses or motives quarrel: Hughes's complicated plot demands unravelling, Hughes's strategies as a poet demand depth, amplification, even repetition—in short, lyric poetry itself. When we are distracted by the grotesque events in Reverend Lumb's church basement, where Bacchants dance about groggily in honor of their Savior, who wears a stag's antlered head and animal hides, we find it difficult to concentrate on metaphor, on detail; language itself—always the primary concern of both poets and readers of poetry—seems rudely, hurriedly, used:

*Felicity is standing loose, hardly moving.*
*Her eyes far off.*
*In the lottery of the mushroom sandwich*
*Everything was arranged for her.*
. . . . . .
*Lumb is suddenly standing in front of*
*her looking at her.*
*He is holding something shaggy and terrible*
*above her.*
*Felicity understands that she is a small*
*anonymous creature which is now going to be*
*killed.*
*She starts to cry, feeling the greatness*
*and nobility of her role.*

Elsewhere, before Lumb is caught up in the dizzying cascade of events that finishes him, he stands alone, in contemplation, gazing at the "unalterably strange earth," and the language Hughes imagines for him is as careful, and as powerful, as anything to be found in the previous books. Lumb senses himself a changeling; he wants to escape to what is to be, he hopes, an ordinary life; but he cannot, his fate is otherwise—

*His life returns as a fly. It lands on his eyelid*
*and trickles down to his mouth-corner.*
*He moves to free himself.*
*Some animal is pushing noisily below*
*in the wood.*
*A squirrel flees up through a beech, like a*
*lashing rocket, and rips into the outermost*
*leaf-net with a crash.*
*Voices recede, snatch back their words*
*and meanings,*
*Become bramble stem, leaf hollows, reticula-*
*tion of twigs.*
. . . . .
*He prays*
*To be guided. He feels his prayer claw*
*at the air, as at glass*
*Like a beetle in a bottle.*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*Gaudete*, for all its length, might have been longer. One needs to know more of the original Reverend Lumb—what is the work the elemental spirits want him to do in the other world? Who, or what, are the 'elemental spirits' themselves? The love story of the Changeling Lumb and the 18-year-old Felicity might have been further dramatized; and is there to be no Messiah as a consequence of the Reverend's innumerable couplings . . . ? Hughes has material here for a thousand-page poem, and since he is forced to spend a fair amount of time in the consciousnesses of the cuckolded men (he wants us to see Lumb from a number of points of view) he has not the space to explore Lumb in depth. Yet what we have of Lumb is fascinating—as a presence he is as mysterious as Wodwo, as fateful and despairing as Crow.

*Gaudete* will probably come to be seen as the most controversial work of England's finest contemporary poet. In the end it is a hymn to mystery itself, to the impersonal inhuman spirit of nature that Schopenhauer called Will and that Hughes has celebrated, often wryly, in earlier volumes. Its final note is presumably 'positive'—there has been an agony, a crucifixion, and a resurrection of sorts; the Changeling Lumb is destroyed and the original Lumb is miraculously restored, priest now to a new God, a new religion:

*Glare out of just crumpled grass—*
*Blinded, I blink.*

*Glare out of muddled clouds—*
*I close my eyes.*

*And the darkness too is aflame.*

*So you have come and gone again*
*With my skin.*

**Joyce Carol Oates**

*Joyce Carol Oates*'s most recent book is *Night-side* (Vanguard).

## Robert Frost: The Work of Knowing by Richard Poirier

(Oxford University Press; $11.95)

In 1966, the critic Richard Poirier published a subtle and germinal book, *A World Elsewhere: The Place of Style in American Literature*. The societal and academic crises of the later '60s then detoured Poirier into a concern for the literary self as performer, as best exemplified in the career of Norman Mailer. With his powerful book on Robert Frost, Poirier returns to the Emersonian meditations he started more than a decade ago, and returns also to his great strength as a critic of the native strain in our literature. This return gives us both the best book yet written on Frost, and the authentic prospect that Poirier will inherit the place left vacant in American criticism since the death of Edmund Wilson.

*A World Elsewhere* is an essay on American Orphism, on Emerson's visionary injunction: "Build therefore your own world." The kernel of Poirier's argument is wholly Emersonian: "It is as if the conventions of English romantic poetry could in America take on the life of prose, assume a reality that even history might recognize and that novels could report as news." Sensitive readings of Hawthorne, Henry James, Mark Twain, Edith Wharton, and Dreiser confirmed Poirier's sense of how a visionary possession of America managed to translate itself into prose narrative.

It was natural that Poirier should go on, after his idealistic detour, to a full-scale study of Frost, since Frost is the most overtly Emersonian major writer of our century. Poirier's wisdom is to show us that Frost is peculiarly most Emersonian where and when he is most formidably evasive. In mapping the strategies and tactics of Frost's poetic evasions, Poirier emerges as a truly strong critic, performing for us the interpretive work of knowing that no other critic of Frost has been capable of doing. Poirier provides suggestive readings of the inescapable poems in the Frost canon, and a continuous defense of Frost's stature as a poet, a defense directed against the rival camps of what Frost called "the Pound-Eliot-Richards gang," and of the more recently grouped admirers of Stevens. Perhaps inevitably, I find myself more persuaded when Poirier urges Frost's merits over Eliot's, than when he vindicates Frost's mode against the even more evasive eloquence of Stevens. But the dispute is aptly urged, since not Eliot or Pound or Williams but Frost stands clear now as the contemporary whose achievement most challenges and illuminates, by juxtaposition, what is lasting in Stevens.

The reviews that I have seen of Poirier's book have emphasized its overturning of the popular, cracker-barrel, homespun, Grandma Moses version of Frost. This is a weak reaction, since Poirier rightly wastes little space on such superficial revisionism. If anything, Poirier *enters* the popular interpretation in order to redeem it, and so raises the homespun view into its actual validity. Poirier's Frost is the common reader's Frost, but folded over, turned round, so that Frost's tropes for a possible wisdom are read, for the first time, as the tropes they are, rather than as the tiresome literalism rendered by much criticism of Frost.

I cite, as a single instance, Poirier's account of Frost's uncanny *The Wood-Pile*, one of the great realizations of Emerson's hopes for an American Sublime. Poirier analogizes it to Stevens's *The Snow Man* as another vision of Emersonian "poverty," of the poet as being a man on the dump of imaginative need. In the trope of the pile of wood, stationed by Frost as a sparse humanizing presence in a barren scene of natural decay, Poirier reads a bleaker transcendence than even Stevens allows. As critic, Poirier traces two Emersonian lineages. One, from Emerson through Santayana to Stevens, touches the extreme reductiveness of Fate only to rise up into the power and defiance of a fully conscious fiction. The other, from Emerson through William James to Frost, meets the same wintry reality, and accepts the victory of Fate, an acceptance that allows, according to Poirier, a more personalized response of power. Whether Poirier is right in his preference for Frost over Stevens here is beyond argument, though I myself would want to suggest that what Poirier calls a "more individuated and personalized tone" in poetry is no more or less a trope than is Stevensian "coldness." But what matters is that Poirier *has* isolated, quite triumphantly, the function of Frost's pile of wood as a Sublime trope or figuration. No one before Poirier has shown how powerful-



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y anti-natural Frost's "natural" netaphors tend to be.

Emerson once observed that: "It is the ›raise of most critics that they have ıever failed because they have ıttempted nothing." It is the praise of ?oirier that he has succeeded because he ıas attempted a major project and has :arried it through strongly, against fashion and in vindication of the enterprise of an Emersonian, that is to say, centrally American criticism.

**Harold Bloom**

*Harold Bloom*'s current book is *Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate* (Cornell University Press).

## Breathing Tokens
## by Carl Sandburg
## edited by Margaret Sandburg

(Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; $8.95)

## A Great and Glorious Romance: The Story of Carl Sandburg and Lilian Steichen
## by Helga Sandburg

(Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; $12.95)

The eleven years that have passed since the death of Carl Sandburg in 1967, at the age of 89, have not sufficed to dim the popular reputation that he cultivated as the Yea-Saying, Lincoln-quoting, People's Poet. In this, his centennial year, we are going to get a great deal of that sort of thing. He would have thoroughly approved.

About the Carl Sandburg that matters and will last—the one who wrote some very beautiful lyric poetry, most of it in the 1910s and early 1920s—we are likely to hear considerably less, for nobody pays much attention to that part of his life and work any more. Yet if a half-century from now, in the year 2028, notice is taken of his 150th anniversary, it will probably be because of the *Chicago Poems* and several dozen additional lyrics.

Sandburg's reputation as a writer of poems (rather than as a Bard, a Public Poet) was quite high in the 1910s, when the Genteel Tradition was being cleared away, and it continued into the 1920s, even though the distance between his kind of free verse and the far more "difficult" poetry of Eliot, Pound, Stevens, Ransom, Crane, and even, in a different way, of Frost was becoming apparent.

In the 1910s the poetics of Sandburg and of the other two "Chicago Poets," Edgar Lee Masters and Vachel Lindsay, had been considered of a piece with that of the Imagists and of Pound, Eliot, & Co. The future of modern poetry, however, lay elsewhere than in Chicago, and by the 1930s, when Sandburg brought out the quasi-poetic work of rhetoric entitled *The People, Yes*, it was clear that Chicago and the Waste Land were two discrete entities.

Today the textbook anthologies that confirm our tastes usually contain no Lindsay and Masters at all, and only a couple of Sandburg poems. These are cited as having, despite their flatness and crudeness of language, a certain imaginative vigor and flavor representative of the first, immediate modern response to the development of urban American industrialism. I quote from a recent American Literature compendium with an extensive and unusually good critical apparatus: "Sandburg was one of the first after Whitman to catch, in poetry, something of the brute reality of the emerging American city."

My guess is that in the long run this situation will be remedied, and Sandburg's early poetry will be rediscovered for what constitutes its real importance: its skillful, sophisticated use of vernacular American idiom to create certain very fine poems which image experience in original and sometimes breathtaking fashion. Sandburg at his best was able to recreate the world around him in notable language. No other American poet has done just what he did. If one will only read in the first several hundred pages of his *Collected Poems* the proof is there, however packed among a considerable amount of dross and excess that increases geometrically with each succeeding volume after the *Chicago Poems*. Lyrics such as "Fish Crier," "A Fence," "Lost," "The Harbor," "They Will Say," "To Certain Journeymen," "Limited," "Bronzes," to cite a few from the first section of *Chicago Poems*, are not merely historical documents. They are not Profound, but they are beautiful, and quite unique.

Sandburg was apparently not a very good self-critic. I say this because his daughter, Margaret Sandburg, has brought out a collection entitled *Breathing Tokens*, consisting of 118 previously unpublished poems by her father, and to my surprise there are at least a dozen which are not second-line work but among his best, equal to almost any in the *Complete Poems*.

Many of these new poems date back to the 1910s, but some few would appear to have been written quite late in the poet's life, and of these there are several which stand up quite well, even measured against the early work. The collection as a whole is quite superior to the volume entitled *Honey and Salt*, which Sandburg himself published at the age of 85 and which contained poems written in the 1950s and 1960s. Notably absent in *Breathing Tokens* is any of the rhetorical expansiveness and attitude-striking that makes so much of his later verse empty


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and sentimental.

There are, in the new collection, some few poems which are of greater length than most of the very best of the early work and which yet manage to sustain themselves and not become repetitious. The longer poem—that is, longer than 25 lines or so—was not Sandburg's forte, and it is a general rule with the work in the *Collected Poems* that the longer a poem is, the less likely it is to be worth reading. Sandburg's imagination worked in sudden, striking images, sharp juxtapositions, strongly realized but relatively simple perceptions; his longer poems can only reiterate, repeat, and grow cumulatively, and so he tends to try to hold them together and develop them by substituting rhetorical argumentation for true structural complexity.

In *Breathing Tokens,* however, are certain poems that not only go on, but go forward. There is a poem called "Heaven is a Valley of Cool Timber" that consists of four stanzas of from eight to 10 lines apiece, with a refrain after each, that is one of the best Sandburg poems I've ever read. There is another, long-lined poem, apparently written late in his life, entitled "There Are Great Loves," which I like a great deal. And there is an earlier poem, "River Town Equations," consisting of a number of short units, which develops and complicates as it goes along, and ends quite intriguingly. Why Sandburg didn't publish these and other of the poems in *Breathing Tokens* during his lifetime is hard to say. He published much that was not as good.

Sandburg's youngest daughter, Helga, who has written several novels and other works, has marked the centennial of her father's birth with a memoir. If you can get past the title, which is hard to do, you find a pretty good book, that will be of considerable use to a future biographer. It is an account of the family origins of Sandburg and his wife Lilian Steichen, and of the early careers of the two and of Mrs. Sandburg's brother, the photographer Edward Steichen.

Much of the book is given over to the letters exchanged between Carl and Lilian Sandburg; since Sandburg was away from home a good deal of the time, this is considerable. What I found most interesting in the book was the picture it gives of the formidable, assertive, optimistic and sometimes naive intellectual life that characterized the Midwest of the pre-1918 years. Our intellectual historians tend to think along East Coast lines, and so we usually get rather little depiction of what was going on in the Midwest during the Progressive Era. Sandburg and his early friends were ardent socialists, were crusading beauty-seekers, were talking, thinking, publishing, proclaiming at all times and in all places. There was a confusion between life and art that was often very creative. There was also a considerable amount of hokum; the early Sandburg didn't really know the difference between Walt Whitman and Elbert Hubbard. This was middle-class pre-Argonne American intellectual ferment, and it seems very attractive now, however innocent and brash. It must have been nice to think that the world and human nature could be changed within the next few years, if one only strove hard enough. Sandburg and his wife thought so, and they loved it, and also each other, very much. Their daughter's memoir is highly interesting.

Carl Sandburg was a complex man. It is impossible to pigeonhole or categorize him. If during the centennial hullaballoo you get tired of hearing him reciting Lincoln on records and identifying himself as the reincarnation of that President, get out the *Chicago Poems*, or read Margaret Sandburg's new collection. It will remind you that mixed in with the showbiz was a real poet.

**Louis D. Rubin, Jr.**

*Louis D. Rubin, Jr.* is University Distinguished Professor of English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

# The Back of the Book

## Wagstaff's Rules

The happy occasion of A. Bartlett Giamatti's selection as the 18th president of Yale causes me to turn once again to the valuable manuscript left many years ago in my possession, which deals specifically with the world Mr. Giamatti is about to command. I refer, of course, to "Rules of University Presidential Behaviour" by Professor Quincy Adams Wagstaff, late of Huxley College, who disappeared mysteriously in 1932. At this fateful moment Mr. Giamatti could do no better than to commit Wagstaff's "Rules" to memory.

1) Upon taking office a new university president is immediately despised by all members of the senior faculty, especially if he has come from the faculty ranks himself. He will never turn their hatred around entirely, but he can successfully neutralize it if he appears to despise himself as much as he is despised, and to despise and feel ashamed of his new role in particular. This appearance may be effected by abjuring luxury at every opportunity; by walking stoop-shouldered as if one has just been hit on the back of the neck with a brick; by affecting cynicism at all signs of progress in the university, specifically those with which he is associated; and by faking the symptoms of madness and fatal disease. The fatal disease won't win the sympathy of the faculty, though it may make them curious; and the madness will remind them of his origins.

2) Upon taking office a new university president is immediately despised by the governing boards and university trustees, both of which have been constantly reminded since his selection of what a bad choice he is, and what a bad job they've done, and how unfit a bunch of Brahmin businessmen are for superintending the life of the mind. The new president will never win over the trustees entirely, but he can mollify their opposition if he appears robust and optimistic at all times, dresses like a million dollars, and talks contemptuously about the mealy-mouthed and lily-livered faculty. He must also shout buoyantly whenever he speaks, and address all board members, total strangers or not, by their first names. If he forgets their given names, he will get by hollering Skeezer, Bumpy, or Gigs.

3) Upon taking office a new university president is immediately despised by the students, especially the wimps who served on his selection committee, and who are now trying simultaneously to win back the respect of their roommates, who will no longer speak to them,



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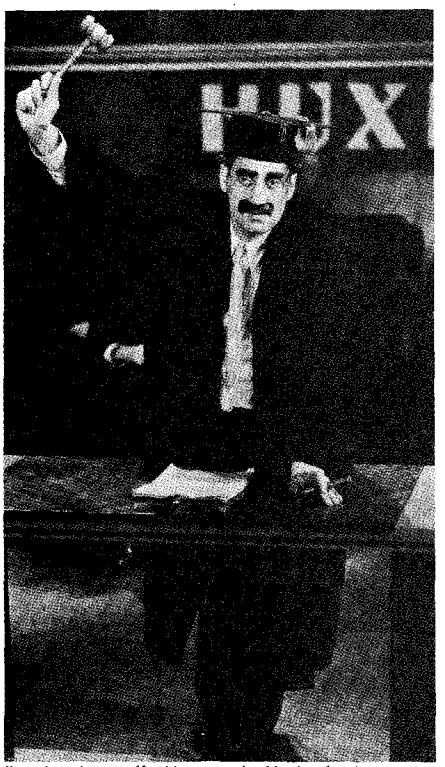
and to win election as student representatives on the governing boards. The latter quest makes them available for cooption eventually, but winning over the majority of students is more difficult. This, too, can never be done entirely, but a new president may hold most undergraduates at bay if he appears to be out of sympathy with



President Wagstaff addressing the Huxley faculty (1932). Universal City Studios, Inc.

every discernible prevailing cultural and political tendency. In times of university radicalism, he must seem conventional; in quieter times, revolutionary, and so forth. He must also appear to harbor a tragic secret, which is tacitly shared by undergraduates individually, yet is misunderstood by undergraduates collectively. Above all, he must not talk with any individual undergraduate for more than three minutes, nor meet with any undergraduate committee at any hour other than 8am, Sunday mornings.

4) A new university president is immediately despised by the student newspaper, so the paper's editor must be coopted as soon as possible. Coopting student editors is no trick, but it takes planning. Under no circumstances should a new president share confidences or privileged information with the editor; even editors from Exeter and Andover see through that ploy. Instead, the president should cultivate an idiosyncrasy, like fist-pounding or foot-stamping to reinforce a point. The editor will usually focus on the idiosyncrasy, which he will interpret as a sign of competency. If that should fail, the president should mention his friendship with the editor of *The New York Times*.

5) No group despises a new president more than the community in which the university is located. Since that community is usually broken down and destitute, a new president will be tempted to share the wealth of his empire with it. He should do nothing of the sort. To show any signs of compatibility with the community would be to deprive community members of the one identifiable object of hatred in their lives. The new president is advised to buy up as many local houses as the university can afford, then turn them into elegant, low rent cottages for faculty recently recruited from other schools. If possible, he should also purchase the local day care center, and convert it into a center for strategic defense studies.

6) The junior faculty has no special reason for despising a new president, but it does so nevertheless, either because it wishes to flatter the senior faculty by imitation, or because it despises the senior faculty even more than the deans despise *them*, and associates the president with senior faculty interests. Two things can be done to modify their hatred, but they must be done within the first 20 minutes of taking office. First, the new president should announce his intention to revamp the entire university curriculum. (This will please the junior faculty who will read the decision as a criticism of their elders; yet it will not displease the senior faculty who will read it exactly the opposite way.) The president then must name no fewer than 12 curriculum-planning committees, with different titles but the same purviews, at least six of which are to be chaired by junior faculty members. He should also order these committees to be elected. This decision alone will kill a year's time, perhaps two.

Second, the new president must take up a personal intellectual cause, such as remedial composition or foreign language study. The cause must be a lost one, and its virtue indisputable. Whenever he speaks publicly, he must mention the cause, until it is known to be an obsession with him. That way, when some disgruntled junior faculty member accuses him that after five years nothing has been done to improve the curriculum, he may reply, outraged, that if these starry-eyed Lochinvars spent a bit more time teaching basics, and less on grandiose schemes, the students might be able to get a job or two

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after graduation. Then he may remind the complainant that his contract is up.

7) Foundations and rich donors automatically despise university presidents, though for opposite reasons. Donors do, because a visit from the president is like a visit from the angel of death. Moreover the new president inevitably wants $10 million for something stupid like an institute for long-hairs; whereas the donor wants something sensible, like a new luxurious dormitory named for his mouse. The president should compromise on a new luxurious dormitory, to be called an institute. The difference will not be noticed.

Foundation officers will be offended by the appearance of the new president, because they feel he is only interested in their money, not their "innovative" ideas about "learning experiences." Therefore the president must never raise the subject of money in their presence. He must pretend to be perplexed about educational policy in the free world, and to have sought the foundation's guidance. When the question of funding is finally broached—by the foundation—he must express doubt as to whether or not money is the answer to complex, moral issues. After some dickering he will agree to accept a grant for half a million, providing that the award will not prevent the president from seeking the foundation's advice in the future.

8) Shortly after taking office a new university president will be deeply despised by his family whom he has turned into grinning mannequins to please the alumni (who despise him anyway because he can't hold a candle to his predecessor), and to dispel suspicions of scandal. He should point out to the children that their little friends who are professors' children will soon be doing them all sorts of favors. As for his wife, he might remind her of the days she sat around with faculty wives carping about salaries, and threaten to beat her brains in if she opens her trap again.

9) Finally, a new university president will be subconsciously despised by every group, young and old, which he addresses. The key is to say nothing memorable; to use and re-use words such as "standards," "quality," "excellence," "freedom of inquiry," "women," and most frequently, "truth." Wherever possible employ German terms rather than Latin, and never refer to anyone inside the university as "liberal" or "conservative," but rather as "progressive" and "traditionalist." The most important thing is to make the subject of every speech the university itself—how perfect an institution it is, how much cleaner and healthier than the outside world. The university president who makes that point often and well will not fail to win the hearts of his enemies, for there are some lies on which all people agree.

**Roger Rosenblatt**


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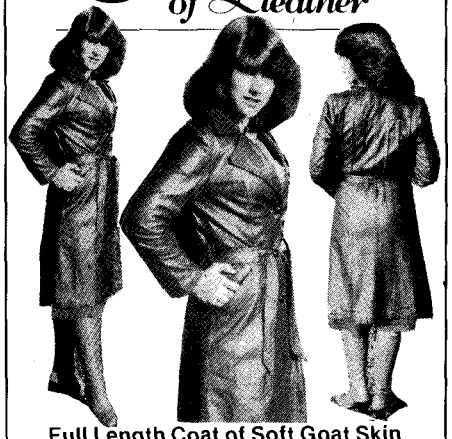

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**TRB,** *from page 2*

Clevelandism of the administration which has been accused of being Republican in Democratic clothing. There was a great sentimental surge for Humphrey last week which he richly deserved, but it was unthinking. Where were these same people in 1968 when Humphrey lost the presidency by a bare 500,000 votes out of 73 million cast? The nation chose Nixon over Humphrey.

I covered the Philadelphia convention in 1948 and have glanced through my yellowed files. Suddenly the dull, dispirited convention came to life. There were three choices on the civil rights plank: do nothing, as the southern bloc demanded; accept an ambiguous compromise recommended by the 108-man platform committee; or go all-out liberal, and accept blacks finally as equals. They beat the southern plank overwhelmingly, 929 to 309. The unknown young mayor of Minneapolis Humphrey, a leader of the ADA, made one of the dozen great speeches I have heard, tingling the spine like a bugle call. "The time has arrived for the Democratic Party to get out of the shadow of states' rights and walk forthrightly into the bright sunshine of human rights." The plank squeaked through, 651½ to 582½, the die-hards bolted, things were never the same again.

The awkward thing today is that Humphrey bequeathed a little legacy to Congress, the Humphrey-Hawkins bill. It gives jobs top priority among government goals. Humphrey hadn't forgotten those unemployed black teenagers in the ghetto. The emotional warmth he inspired (which gave Richard Nixon a vehicle for leaving self-imposed exile in California) may pass Humphrey-Hawkins. "An indispensable first step," Humphrey called it on December 4. Carter has endorsed it. Can this legacy of a beloved senator be rejected?

## Corrections

In the January 7th issue, contributor Alan Tonelson was identified as Associate Editor of the *Inter Dependent*, "a publication of the United Nations." The *Inter Dependent* is in fact published by the United Nations Association.

The price of *Milton and the English Revolution* by Christopher Hill (Viking Penguin) was incorrectly stated in our January 7th review. It is $20.



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**Correspondence,** *from page 5*

Danger which is obsessed with it. Kennan's views on the necessity of getting rid of this obsession are not, as Fairlie asserts, those of a "One-Man Committee on Past Concerns." They are representative of a broad spectrum of informed opinion—an opinion not unconcerned with "human rights" but which holds that the way to approach "human rights" in the USSR is the same as the way to make sure we do not destroy ourselves, namely working diligently if cautiously to improve our relations with the Soviet Union on the basis of present realities, not those of another age. Those of us who believe this are grateful to have George Kennan as a spokesman, rather than the Committee on the Present Danger or a *ci-devant* English reporter indirectly supporting it.

*Fred Warner Neal*
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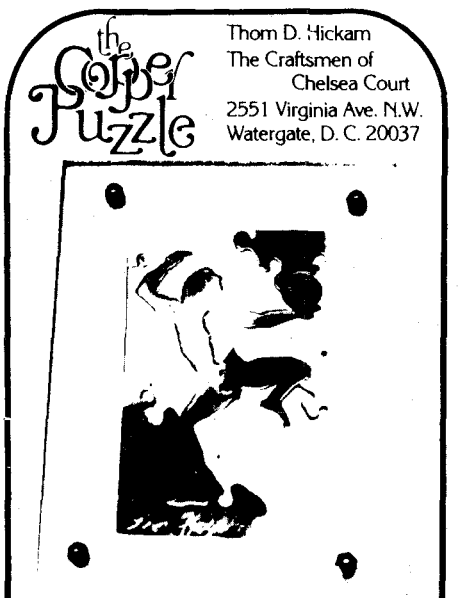

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# Washington Diarist

*Chutzpah*

**The President's adviser** on foreign and national security affairs may still be Zbigniew Brzezinski. But his instructor is the aging King Khalid, sharif of Mecca and monarch of Saudi Arabia by the Grace of God, the overthrow of his brother and the achievements of modern medicine. And despite the deep enmities between the Saudi house and the incumbent of the Peacock throne across the Persian Gulf, Carter heard the same message from the Shah in Teheran as he heard from the royal gentleman in Riyadh. With their anxious words about rising Communist influence in the Mediterranean and the Horn ringing in his ears, Carter rattled his sabre at Italy and Ethiopia. The Russians heard him and rattled back. So did Berlinguer. Whether the President will do anything more is another question, or rather several questions. The most important question is what more he should or can do. Another is whether Congress—in Ralph Waldo Emerson's words "a standing insurrection"—will allow him to do anything at all. And then there is always the special question about this President: having said or done one thing, will he not quickly reverse himself?

**Chutzpah is a word** easiest to define by example. My favorite concerns a child who murders his father and his mother, then pleads for mercy because he's an orphan. The Saudis have colossal *chutzpah*. Their oil heist has battered the economies of the industrial nations. The battered US dollar is just one piece of evidence of just how much damage has been done. Which brings us to the great Saudi grievance. Unable to invest their surplus at home, unwilling to share it with their indigent third world brothers—since 1973 more indigent than ever—and wary of putting too much into fixed assets in any one western country, the Saudis have invested in the US dollar, which has had the temerity to decline in value. The Saudis don't like that. While they're getting very much richer, they're also getting just a little bit poorer. We're also letting them down by not stimulating other economies so that they will buy more petroleum. Properly chastened by his Saudi friends, but not until then, President Carter tried to revive our lagging currency with a conspicuous and wholly understandable lack of success. The problem goes back to the price of oil. We're exporting dollars to pay not only for our trade deficit, but for the deficits of others. This can't go on. And none of the bleak conservation schemes intoned by the stern Puritan preachers among us will much affect this problem. Which is why, sooner or later, this President or another will have to get tough with the masters of the petroleum cartel. Otherwise it will be our undoing, and theirs as well.

**Speaking of chutzpah,** I see where President Anwar Sadat has reverted to his old posturing. At least I hope his calling home the Egyptian delegates to the Jerusalem talks is just posturing. But what can he possibly mean when he says he has given everything and Begin nothing? The Israelis are about to restore the whole damn Sinai to Egyptian sovereignty with the not inconsiderable military perils for Israel that go with it. What Begin has proposed for the West Bank, moreover, has stirred fears even among his more dovish Labor opponents. To be sure, Sadat himself has taken great risks, but they are personal, and they do not involve the destiny of a beleaguered and remnant people. The hysterical response by the other Arabs to Sadat's mere effort to negotiate a settlement demonstrates why Israel should be cautious in peace talks and on peace terms—and, why despite the hectoring from the balconies, she will be.

**Not many Arabs** live in Tel Aviv but two who did were killed there last week by a crude explosive device destined for Jews. The victims: a father and his young son, who picked the bomb up while the two were walking through an empty lot. This kind of terror is always the act of cowards. Had Jews died, however, several Palestinian groups in Beirut would have competed with the devil himself to claim credit for the deed. Now the blood of Arab innocents mocks their momentary silence and in doing so discredits their every pretension.

**I've never understood** why it's more important to save intellectuals and artists from the clutches of tyranny than it is to save ordinary folk. (I also don't understand, by the way, why the death of women in war is sadder than the death of men. But that's another matter.) My wife and I were involved in the Biafra support movement. We upset some of our friends then when we declined to join in some special effort for Ibo scholars. The nameless and the faceless, those who might disappe without worldly traces, somehow er gaged us more. The well known often d get sprung, or their health and sanity i prison is protected by their reputation Amnesty International told th Ghanaian government, for exampl that the imprisoned poet Kofi Awonoc was "a special person whom the worl was watching carefully." I'm glad tha Awonoor is out of jail. But who speak for those about whom no one knows an who are not special?

**Paul Robeson is causing controvers again.** He was an All-American end a Rutgers, a rare recognition for a black i those days. He also had a great presenc and a great voice: those who heard hin sing or saw him act—I did as a child—d not easily forget. Records are stil available that amply communicate hi extraordinary lyric power, and hi political naivete. "Ballad for Americans is not really folksy. It is a pastiche o facile slogans appropriate to Brotherhood Week pep rally. That' hardly the worst of it. He was a inveterate apologist for Stalinism Robeson once said that no Negro woul fight in a war against Soviet Russia How silly! Blacks fought in Korea an Vietnam—just like whites, except mor so. The average black is Auden's un known citizen: "When there was peace he was for peace; when there was war he went." A new one-ma show abou Robeson, starring James Earl Jones an about to open in New York, does no celebrate Robeson's politics. Some vigilantes in the black community have gone after the play and were trying t put an interdict on it. James Baldwin Coretta Scott King, Julian Bond an Representatives John Conyers an Charles Rangel are members of the threatening mob.

**Meanwhile Silvia Tennenbaum,** who is a rabbi's wife, has written an autobiographical novel, *Rachel, the Rabbi's Wife* (Morrow), which has offended some paranoids in the *Jewish* community because of allegedly unflattering portraits of a rabbinical family. "It's an insult to American Jews. . . . It appeals to anti-Semites. . . . " A posse seems to have formed to make the book a flop. One bookseller wrote the publisher that he had cut his initial orders from 200 to 100 copies. Now that is a really principled protest.

**M.P.**



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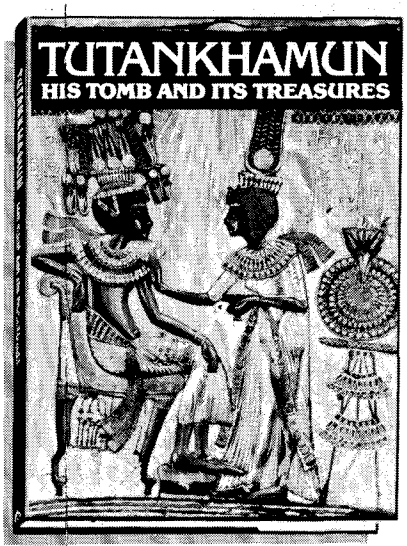


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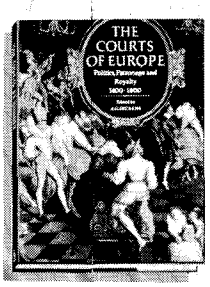


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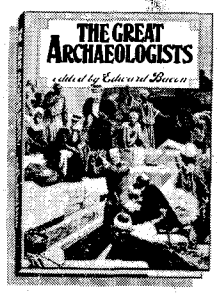


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